

Stick With Me (DreamnotFound)

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Stick With Me (DreamnotFound)

by [passmethemolly](#)

Summary

Two friends.

One airport.

One big ass storm.

One secret that could tear them apart.

George and Clay are stuck in a Florida airport after a hurricane tears through the city and they only have one suitcase, a \$20 bill, a bag of GoldFish, and each other. As the hurricane grows stronger outside, the stress and emotions start running high. It's not long before George and Clay realize they're dealing with something a lot bigger than the storm.

Notes

Mature for language use. Mentions of alcohol use.

!!!! I love and respect both Dream and George and this is no way meant to make them uncomfortable, this is purely for entertainment. I will remove any content that they deem weird or uncomfortable to them, I do not want to hurt their friendship in any way. !!!!!

follow me on twitter I'm kinda funny: @passmethemo11y

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

In hindsight, Clay should've known that there was going to be a storm. He's lived in Florida his whole life- he should be able to take one look at the angry clouds coming his way and go 'Yeah, maybe today isn't a great day to fly.' But he didn't. He figured it was just another quick summer thunderstorm and it would be done and over within twenty minutes. So as he took a deep breath, the air smelling like rain, he continued to lean against his suitcase as he waited for his friend to show up.

Clay was supposed to catch his flight to New York in an hour, and George was supposed to get a flight back to England after visiting a distant family member. It just so happened that their flights were at the same place and at the same time. They rarely saw each other in person, and it was too much of a perfect opportunity to meet up for a little bit before parting ways again.

"Dream!"

Clay turns his head, face already breaking out into a grin, as George stumbles out of his Uber, and they meet halfway to the doors.

"There you are! What the hell, why does it take you forever to get to places?" Clay jokes, kicking the back of George's suitcase and making it hit the back of George's ankles.

He stumbles a bit. "Would you stop that? And it does not take me forever- you're acting like I can control the driver-" Clay kicks the suitcase again and George throws a look at him over his shoulder. "Oh my god, you're so funny, ha-ha."

"I am! Thank you so much," Clay said. He could feel George's eye roll as he pushes past him and leads his friend to the security checkpoint. As they stand silently in line, George searching for his ticket online, Clay asks: "Did you miss me?"

"You can't miss what you don't like," George deadpans, not even looking up.

"Okay, but weren't you begging me to meet you here and complaining about how you didn't know where to go and needed me as a guide? Was that you?" Clay retorts and George falls silent, eyes flicking up to him. Clay raises an eyebrow.

"...No."

"You're such an idiot- look! I still have the messages to prove otherwise." He starts to dig through his sweatshirt pockets for his phone and George swats at his arm.

"Okay! Okay, relax, you weirdo. You would want help in an airport while visiting a foreign country."

"You've been here before, though? It's not that foreign," he points out. George groans, throwing his head back.

"You're so annoying! You know exactly what I meant-"

"Dude, go. It's your turn," Clay said, giving George a shove to the officer. For a second, Clay thought he took it too far and he should dial back his excitement, but then he saw George's goofy grin as he talked with the officer. It's all just jokes.

They make their way through security and as Clay ties his sneakers back up, George goes and checks in his suitcase, and he comes back empty-handed except for his nerdy blue backpack.

"Didn't I buy you a new bag last Christmas? That one has holes in the pockets, George," Clay said and gave a small tug on the hole.

"Yeah, but I like this one."

"It looks like you've had this since middle school."

"Because I have. Yours is so expensive; I don't want to lose it or ruin it," George explains as they walk under the glass roof, the sky looking darker than it did before. Clay bites the inside of his cheek but doesn't say anything. He didn't want to speak a storm into existence.

"Oh, okay."

"But I will! I'm going to use it for...um- for walking through London when I get back," George rushes to reassure his friend that the bag totally wasn't sitting in his closet with the tag still on it. It's not like he was ungrateful- he was legitimately scared to use it and do something by accident.

"George, don't worry about it," Clay mumbles, still stealing nervous looks up at the storm clouds. George follows his gaze.

"Holy shi- is it going to rain?" George asks. As Clay approaches one of the boarding terminals, he notices that other people were checking their phones and looking outside with a small concern.

"I mean, yeah. Obviously," he gestures a hand to the sky. "It doesn't look too sunny and warm out right now."

"Okay, Dream," George sighs and he stands next to his friend. Clay starts to check the weather as George paces slowly up and down the window.

No fucking way- you're serious... Clay thought as he rereads the news headline above the weather report. A category two hurricane? Now? Right now? Right before I leave for my sister's wedding?

"Everything good?" George says and Clay didn't realize his mouth was hanging open in slight shock.

"Yeah...yes," he answers. *Okay, maybe our flights will be okay since the storm isn't due to hit us yet for another two hours. We'll be fine. I'll make it to New York on time and George will be on his way to England safely.* "It's just a small hurricane, but we'll be good."

"A hurricane?!" George's eyes widen. "Dream- are you sure? I don't think planes fly through those that easily."

"I don't know, some times they do. Look, don't worry. Our flights board in twenty minutes and we'll be long gone before-"

"Wait- twenty minutes?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Dream, my flights on the other side of the airport," George said. He swings his backpack over his shoulders. "Fuck, I have to go now."

A small pang of disappointment hits Clay. "Seriously? How far is it?"

"I board at gate E, and we're at A right now. I really have to go," George says, but despite looking towards the sign pointing him to the direction of gate E, he doesn't move. Even when Clay said a small bye, George was still standing in front of him with his hands clenched tightly around the straps of his bag.

"Dude. Go. Seriously, you're going to miss boarding," Clay urges him. His gate was B, which was in the opposite direction, but it was a two-minute walk away. George would have to speed walk or run.

"Okay," George said, and the two look at each other. "Okay, yeah. Bye Dream! It was nice seeing you again." He takes slow steps backward.

Clay laughs. "Bye, George! Text me when you're in the air or back in London."

"Bye!"

"Goodbye!"

George gives one last small wave to his friend before the crowd of incoming travelers swallows him up and Clay is left standing alone with his hand frozen in a wave. Their meetup wasn't long but it was okay. Clay had a feeling he would see George again- maybe in a few months instead of waiting a whole year again.

After a few more minutes of nervously checking his flight for updates and the weather app, he finally feels confident enough to walk to his gate. The airport was busy as hell and Clay had to weave and dodge people's bags and children. At least his height allowed him to see over the crowd so he knew exactly where he was heading. Poor George was probably running into everyone.

Clay takes an empty seat between strangers and leans his head back to look at the fluorescent lights burning his pupils. He wondered if George made it in time, and that prompted him to recheck his phone, this time though- his fingers were hovering over George's contact. He's probably sitting on his plane now. Eh, not like he was going to answer anyway.

George was in the same boat as Clay. He had his phone in his lap with Clay's messages facing up and him as he debated to text his friend, saying that he just barely made it and he accidentally hit a kid with his bag. George decided against it though and shut his phone off, pressing his forehead against the window of the plane. He looked out towards the flight sitting in front of gate B before a low rumbled of thunder echoed in the distance. The quiet conversations pick up into mutters and George watches, mildly lost on what's happening, as everyone then goes to check their phones. He hears a small pop next to him and he watches as a raindrop slides down his window.

Then another.

And another.

More start to come down as more thunder sounds. This can't be good.

He turns back to gate B. What'd Dream say? Planes sometimes flew through these? Ugh, of course, he would know better than me. George takes a steady breath and unclenches his jaw. He already hated flying, and now he had to fly through a hurricane? What kind of sick exposure therapy was this?

"They're canceling flights," George picks up in a conversation and it takes every cell in his body not to twist around and start asking questions. England rarely gets hurricanes and when they did, they usually died pretty quickly and ended up just being a strong thunderstorm. Only a few times

did they actually get hit like America does when they get hurricanes.

The rain picks up- now sounding like a million people are drumming their fingertips on the plane- and the sky doesn't look any better. The trees around the airport sway in the wind as it picks up.

George's phone buzzes and he jumps. "Hello?"

"George- are you still on your flight?"

"Uh, y-yeah. But I just heard they're canceling flights now."

"I know, they just canceled mine. Which is stupid because we're heading away from the hurricane and we were already all boarded and now they're saying that we have to get off and either reschedule for another flight around the storm or head home-"

"Wait, shut up for a second," George said, and he focuses on the announcement coming from the pilot. George throws his head back against his headrest in frustration "They just canceled mine too."

"I just checked- the hurricane is apparently hitting us a lot earlier than they predicted and now we have to sit this out but I don't have a car and-"

"Dream! Stop ranting, it's fine."

"George- we're stuck."

"What? No, we aren't, what do you mean?" He asks, pressing the phone tighter to his ear, and his eyebrows scrunch together.

"We're stuck," Clay says and George can hear his forced smile through the phone. "No one's going to want to pick us up, some roads will flood since we're so close to the ocean, everyone's already rebooking flights so they won't have any space left-"

"Okay and what about booking a hotel or something? We can't just be stuck in an airport," George said with a laugh. They weren't 'stuck'; they just needed to think.

"Hotels are probably all booked from the travelers coming in and from the flight rescheduling. Plus, like I said before, no one will want to drive us on flooded roads in a hurricane. I don't even drive in Florida storms," Clay said. George falls silent for a moment. Huh.

"So...we're-"

"Utterly completely fucked? Yeah."

George rolls his eyes. "I was going to say 'stuck' but sure. That too."

"Okay, we're getting off now. I'll try to find you later-" The line dies and George listens to the silence for a few seconds. *Okay, either Dream died or his phone did...* George thought.

George didn't even know where to go once he got off the plane. Was he meeting Clay here or at his gate? Were they meeting in the middle? Should he just stay here until Clay comes for him like a lost child? George was lost and the crowd of people wasn't thinning despite flights being canceled and the employees urging everyone to leave and get to an actual shelter. With beds and showers and stuff.

Sleeping sounds so good, he longs and he didn't even realize how tired he was. George went from

airport to airport today, and all he wanted to do was to curl up in one of the seats and take a quick nap. He couldn't, though. He needed to find his friend and he needed to get his suitcase back so he would at least have a clean shirt for tomorrow. Or whenever the stupid storm decides to leave.

Rubbing the exhaustion out of his eyes, George squares his shoulders, and he starts walking to gate B.

"Come on..." Clay mumbles as he desperately clicks the power button on his phone. So far, he's only seen his reflection in the black screen, and he had no idea where to find George. Clay had no way to reach out and ask where they were meeting in this gigantic airport. He should've charged his phone.

As Clay walks through the cramped airport, he saw one of those customer service counters around the corner. *Might as well make myself useful- maybe I can still grab a flight for George? There has to be empty seats on an oversea flight...*

However, as Clay took longer strides to the counter to beat the incoming crowd behind him, he ends up slowing to a shocking stop because holy fuck the line for the service counter was snaking down the corridor. *Okay nevermind*, Clay decided right there and then that he was super dumb for letting his phone die since rebooking online would've been so much easier. But his. Stupid. Fucking. Phone. Died.

Clay lets out a small grunt of frustration and continues walking. His patience was growing thin with the slow walkers and the eye-twitching screaming children, but he kept weaving through the crowd. He had to keep his head level until he found George, and then they can get a plan, and he can call his sister, and they can wait out the storm. Clay swerves around an older couple after almost running directly into them, and he mumbles a quick apology as he passes. His heart was racing and his stomach was hurting from the nerves, which caused his mind to start racing with thoughts and hopeless plans. His legs moved quicker into a small jog as his eyes scanned the crowd's faces for his friend. Clay needed George right now.

"Come on, where are you?" Clay said and he stands in front of gate E. It was almost empty down here since everyone must've migrated to the central part of the airport. The employees give him looks as he erratically spins in a circle for George.

"Sir, are you okay?" One of them asks. Clay looks at the blonde stewardess who had a hand on the phone, ready to call security. *I look ridiculous right now. Okay, deep breath in and-*

"Uh- yeah. Yeah, I'm good just looking for someone," he explained, and he pauses for a second before asking: "You wouldn't happen to see a guy in his early twenties with brown hair? He's British, and he was on this flight but I can't get ahold of him."

"We have a lot of people that match that description-" The other stewardess says in a bored tone.

"No! No, I think it was that guy I was telling you about? The cute one?" The blonde says and Clay squints. The what one?

"Oh!"

"Yeah, his name was George- I scanned his ticket in when he boarded-" the blonde one starts to explain to her friend, but Clay jumps at his friend's name.

"Yes! George! Did you see where he went?" Clay asks and the girls look at each other.

"I think he headed towards the central area along with everyone else," she answers but Clay had already turned around and walking towards that area of the airport.

"Thanks!" He called over his shoulder. He rubbed his face in embarrassment as soon as he was out

of sight, his head hurting at the painful awkwardness of having to hear that conversation about George.

Clay slowly makes his way back, completely over this whole mess, and he finds himself in front of the service desk again. He presses his lips in a tight line and scans the screen posted above the rapid moving employees, watching as the listed flights turn red from being canceled or disappearing because it's full. *This is so dumb- how did they not plan around the hurricane?* He thought bitterly as he turned away. His impatience was growing, but he stubbornly found the back of the line and stood in it. *Just ignore everything else. Eyes forward. And breathe.* George will show up eventually.

George was very lost, though. Somehow, when he was trying to get to gate B, he got turned around, and he found himself walking into a terminal that was in the middle of being built. He had no idea how he got there. He had no idea why American airports were so big. But all George could do was give the remaining construction workers an awkward smile before turning around. He scanned the signs, trying to get back on the path, but he was left having to turn around because he didn't recognize the area.

George dials Clay's number for the fifth time in ten minutes- hoping that he bunkered down by an outlet and was trying to get ahold of George too. He scoffs at his friend's contact picture as the voicemail plays, and he hangs up. Still dead. *Great, I have no idea where I am or where Dream is. He wouldn't go looking for me, right? Oh my god- I should've stayed there,* George cringes at his stupid decision. It would've been smarter to have the guy that knew the airport go to him instead of the opposite. Leave it to George to get himself lost during a fucking hurricane.

George's feet were dragging on the floor as he kept walking. The hallways felt so long and everyone was talking too loudly. He yawns as he enters another unfamiliar terminal- but this time, there was a mob of people gathered and George woke right up after. It seemed promising enough and he comes upon a long line of people, all looking frustrated and nervous. He had to be in the right place now. *Even if Dream isn't here, at least I found a service desk.*

He kept walking but then stopped. Which again, that was a stupid idea that caused the man behind him to run straight into him, and George stumbled forward a bit.

"Sorry! I'm sorry," he apologized to the man as his face burned. The man looked annoyed but just shrugged and continued walking. It looked like everyone was too tired to care.

Anyways, George stopped because of two things. The first thing was that he realized he could get information on where his suitcase could be, and he could have all of his stuff back. The second thing was that he walked right by Clay. It was hard to miss him when he looked like a green giraffe in that ugly hoodie he always wore.

"Dream!" George said as he slapped his friend's arm.

"George!" Clay responds, his face breaking out in a relieved grin. It was short-lived, and his face went back to being scrunched up in confusion. "Where were you?! I looked everywhere for you- I went all the way down to your gate."

"I was looking for you! I tried calling you and-"

"My phones dead!" Clay cries and he pulls it out, shoving the black screen into his face. George frowns and pushes Clay's phone away.

"Yeah, I know. I got lost."

"...You got lost?"

"Yes."

"Okay, I gotcha," Clay sighs and he grabs George's arm, giving it a small tug. George presses against Clay's side in the line and when George goes to give his friend space, Clay's hand pulls him right back in.

"Dream, what are you doing?" George asks and his cheeks burn yet again. God, why does he always get so flustered when he's tired? He swears to himself that this was kind of weird and he did not like being this close. Clay's eyes study the crowd behind him before locking on to his. *He swore he did not like being this close.*

"You were standing in the way of all the people?" Clay said like it was apparent, and he lets go of George.

George glanced behind him and realized that he would be, in fact, in the way of all the people. "Ooooh," he draws out. Clay snorts and faces forward again.

"You're so dumb."

George doesn't have the energy to retort back, and he takes a small sidestep away, creating that much needed space between them again. The air was a lot colder than he realized, and he folds his arms across his body. He hoped he would get his things back.

They waited. And waited. And waited. George watched the sky light up with lightning and Clay counted the lights on the ceiling, both too lost in thought to talk. The line only started to move quickly because tired parents and impatient people would flake out of line which moved the boys closer and closer until-

"Good evening, how can we help tonight?" A woman said. George and Clay look at each other in an *Oh shit. We didn't figure out who was going to do the talking* kind of way. George gives him a small shrug because what the hell was he supposed to do? Clay gave him a slight eye roll and turned to the woman.

"Any flights?" Clay's tone was bland, and the three of them knew the answer. It was worth a shot, though.

"To?" She asks, mouse clicking behind the counter.

"London."

George gives him a funny look. "And New York? You need a flight too."

"There's no way they have open flights to New York. Plus, you gotta go back to London- you haven't been home in like what, a month?" Clay said. George looks at the woman who was waiting for them to answer her question.

"Are there any?" George asks quietly. He didn't want to be or sound selfish by jumping at a chance to get a flight home, but in a way, Clay had a point. He hasn't been home in a long time and his bones ached to sleep in his bed again. Out of the corner of his eye, he sees Clay bow his head a bit when he asked the question.

"There are two, actually. We have one boarding now with four more seats and then one that's leaving in twenty minutes with eight open seats. However, that one does not fly directly to London.

It goes to Dublin Airport," she lists the flights and George's eyes widen. Clay looks at George.

"You want to get a seat?"

George opens his mouth, but no sound comes out, and he glances at Clay. His friend looked anxious despite the excited smile on his face and George knew better than to dip right now. George was just going home but Clay could be missing his own sister's wedding if the hurricane didn't clear and that didn't sit right with him.

"Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to make a decision quickly," the woman said with a smack of her gum. George sighs.

"No, it's okay. I'll wait it out."

It was the woman's turn to widen her eyes. "A-are you sure? We can get you that seat for the early flight now and we can hold the plane for you."

"No- no, it's fine. I would rather stay here," he reassures her. *Please don't keep pushing because I might actually start running to the flight and leave.*

"George, what?" Clay asks.

"Don't worry about it. I'll stay here with you," George said. He sees Clay relax a bit and George's chest feels warm with his good choice. "But is there any way I can get my suitcase back?"

"No."

What. "...No..." He repeats.

"We are not allowed to send our workers out to work the machinery- or in general- in harsh weather conditions, so all suitcases checked in are on your previous flight. I can assure you that your things are safe and we will put it on your correct flight when the hurricane passes," she explains, and George's heart drops. He didn't have anything in his bag except for his laptop, chargers, and a few pounds for the London Airport. And a bag of snacks. But he was anything but hungry right now.

"Wait, are you serious? There's no way he can get it? Like what if it lightens up, can they get it then?" Clay said, doing that Clay thing where he sounded angry when he was just really surprised.

"Dream, chill- it's not a big deal," he said. It was actually a huge deal, and George was bummed about not getting the stuff like he thought, but they didn't need to be pissing off the airport staff if they were going to be trapped in here.

"I'm sorry, sir."

"There's workers out there now!" Clay cries and he gestures to the window, and George sees men in bright orange shirts at one of the plane's wheels.

"They're working on securing the planes. They are not operating the machines needed to pull the suitcases from the plane," she states slowly like she was talking to a child. George sees Clay's expression darken. Oh no.

"My friend has nothing. I only have \$20, and we have nowhere to go except here. He needs his things," his friend starts and George rolls his eyes, placing a hand on Clay's arm.

"I'm sorry, sir. There's nothing we can do."

"Bullsh-"

"Clay! Just stop, let it go," George cries before his friend could finish the word, and Clay finally turns to him. *Please just let it go, please just let it go, please-* George tries to push his thoughts to him and Clay groans. George rarely used his friend's actual name unless it was needed. This was a needed moment.

"Right. Sorry. Come on, let's go."

"Go where?" George asks and Clay yanks George's hand to follow him, leaving the woman to move on to the next customer.

"I don't know. Just...anywhere but with people," he mumbles, and George allows himself to be pulled. He zones out on the back of his friend's head and at the messy, dirty blond hair. Something itches in the back of George's mind. Like a forgotten memory but he just could not focus enough to try to piece it together, so he tears his eyes away and he gets yanked to a hard left.

After a few minutes of walking and Clay mumbling to himself, he finally finds a somewhat empty gate with a few families and strangers sitting in the chairs. Kids were lying next to the window, watching the barely visible world through the rainy night while their parents leaned against each other with their eyes closed. Clay finally lets go of George's hand when they take a row of seats in the far back corner.

Clay still had his suitcase, obviously. He never checks it in since stuff like this could happen, and it did, but now that left him with their supplies. He had two weeks worth of clothes, personal hygiene stuff, and then he had his wallet in his sweatshirt pocket and his phone charger in his back one. Judging by how George didn't even bother to go through his bag when Clay started unzipping his suitcase, he assumed he didn't have anything. A pang of pity hit him as George rested his head on the wall behind them, eyes sliding shut.

"You good, dude?" Clay whispers, nudging him with his elbow. George opens one eye.

"Just peachy. I'm just really tired," he said. Then there's a click and low whirl that echos in the building, and Clay guessed they turned the AC on. "And now I'm cold."

"It's so dumb how they couldn't get your stuff, like either way they have workers out there so might as well get people's things. It made no sense-"

"Dream. It's fine. There's nothing we can do," George mutters. His voice was hoarse from being on the edge of sleep, and Clay leans forward, staring down at his clothes. He didn't bring a lot of warm things since it was in the middle of summer- the only hoodie he had he was wearing.

"Here," Clay said and he tossed his green hoodie into George's lap. "You know... since you're cold."

George blinked down at it. "I didn't ask for-"

"I know but I feel bad and you don't have anything, so don't worry about it. I get hot when I sleep anyways," Clay rushes to explain. His neck felt hot from George's questionable expression, and he almost regretted giving it to him but *Oh, only if you knew George.*

"Okay... thanks. Not like we're going to get much sleep anyways, this place isn't exactly-"

"Comfortable, yeah," Clay said and he looks around. A few people were laid out on the carpeted floor with their bags propped under their heads. No one, except for the kids, had a blanket so they wouldn't be the only ones that looked weird just lying on the ground. "Why don't we just do that?"

George follows Clay's point. "What? You're joking," he scoffs.

"George, do you actually want to sleep sitting up?" Clay said, his eyebrows quirking jokingly. George was a weird guy, but was he that weird?

The answer was yes. A very hard yes. Because even as Clay tried to convince him that it would work- and he even got his tall ass on the floor and *demonstrated* how they would sleep- George called him an idiot and leaned his head against the wall again. Clay sighs but stays on the floor in front of George's feet, the bag stuffed with his socks and shirts under his head. Desperate times called for desperate measures.

Clay doesn't remember being awake at all. He just knows that he was still staring at the row of seats in front of him when the lights shut off in the airport. All the conversation around them eventually died into dead silence, and all Clay could hear was George's soft breathing above him and the rain on the roof. Clay pretended earlier not to notice George slowly pull on his hoodie, and he pretended not to notice George play with the drawstrings. The last time George wore his hoodie was back last year when Clay flew to England to visit him, but he didn't like to remember that. George didn't know and neither did Clay. As far as they both know, nothing happened.

He knew he was going to have to tell George eventually. It was something too personal to keep his friend in the dark about since it literally involved him also, but he couldn't. Clay knows as soon as he brings it up, George is going to shut down and he will not talk to Clay. So, he decided to hold the card to his chest and turn a blind eye to the facts, keeping their friendship strong and steady for the year that followed. He wanted their friendship and nothing else.

Clay preferred it that way.

Despite the airport being huge and filled with countless stores, there was nothing to do. Almost nothing has changed from yesterday except the crowd was slightly smaller since people were now booking hotels and leaving as soon as they could. George didn't blame them one bit for giving up on day one of sleeping at the airport. His neck was killing him, and he felt worse than he did yesterday.

George and Clay stayed in their small corner as the hours dragged on, and not once did the rain lighten up. The world was gray and wet and George played the new game of counting the seconds between each thunder or lightning strike. His phone was dry and Clay was laid out on the seats next to him, facing up to the ceiling with an arm laid over his eyes. Clay checked his phone again.

"What time is it?" George asked, twisting away from the window.

"It's been three minutes since I last checked," Clay mumbles, and he pulls his arm off his face to look at George. He sighs heavily before adding, "Do you want to do something?"

"Like?"

"Um... I don't know. Walk around?"

George turns back to the window with a shrug. "Eh, maybe later."

"George, there is never going to be a later! It's been ten in the morning for like three hours now," his friend whines. George snorts.

"Don't think about it and it'll go by faster," George said. Clay groans dramatically and sits up, looking out the window too.

"What are you even doing? Watching the rain?"

"Something like that, yeah."

"Dude, that's like watching paint dry."

"It's better than watching the clock tick," George said and there's another roll of thunder. *One, two, three-*

"Jokes on you- the clock on my phone doesn't tick." *Four, five, six...*

"You're such an idiot," George laughs. *Seven, eight-* and there's another loud clap, causing some people to jump a bit.

"You love me," Clay said. George feels a finger dig into his side, and he slaps his hand away, raising his eyebrow at that line. Clay's playful grin falters for a second and George cocks his head in confusion.

"Do I really, though?" George jokes back and he sees Clay's shoulders slack a bit in relief. *That was weird...Anyways- one, two, three...* He goes back to counting as Clay lays back down.

George, lowkey, was regretting not taking those flights back to Europe. He missed his tiny apartment and his things and having everything in one area. He missed having his own space and not having to keep his bored friend entertained-

"Dream, if you kick me one more time, we're going to have issues," George snaps, shooting a look at Clay. His friend slowly lowers his sneaker back to the floor.

"Walk with me."

"Why?"

"I don't want to sit here anymore."

"Okay? Go walk by yourself," George suggests and Clay groans again.

"George- c'mon. Please? It'll be fun, I promise you," Clay tries to convince, but George was grounded to his seat. His entire body felt like lead, and anytime he moves his head, his neck hurt. He just wanted to sit still and zone out. Or nap.

"Dream-"

"Please."

"I don't want-"

"Please," Clay said again. George meets his friend's eyes and they fall silent, both refusing to look away and back down. George squints his eyes a bit, and Clay raises his eyebrows expectantly.

"Fine. Whatever," George sighs and he finally looks away. There's a small whoop of victory, and they gather their sad excuse of resources, starting the trek down the terminal.

This is really fucking awkward- why is it so awkward? Clay wondered, his eyes shifting to his grumpy friend. George looked terrible. He always did in Clay's mind, but he meant extra terrible today. On top of George's grumpiness- his friend's heavy eye bags and stiff movements topped it all off. Clay's hoodie was wrinkled from sleep, his hair was sticking up in spikes, and George willingly walked around like that. Willingly. The first thing Clay did, when he woke up, was go to the bathroom and make sure he looked somewhat decent.

They come across the big fountain in the middle of the food court. The bottom was littered with coins, and Clay stops to look in.

"Hey, George, how much money you thinks in there?" Clay questioned. George, noticing that Clay stopped walking a while ago, goes back to his friend's side and peers in.

"I don't know- I can't do the conversions on the top of my head right now," his friend said.

"My guess is at least a hundred. What would that be in pounds?"

"I literally just said I can't do the conversions right now," George said. Clay shoots his friend a look and he wished he could slap the crankiness out of George right now. If anything, he didn't have to stay with Clay- he had every reason to take those flights back.

Clay digs into his pockets and pulls out a penny from his wallet, holding it up to the fluorescent lights.

"I wish this hurricane will end," he says before tossing it into the water. The boys watch it sink to the bottom and blend it with the rest of the coins. "You want one?"

He can see the gears turning in George's head. "Yeah, sure. Why not?"

Clay goes to dig back into his pockets but comes up empty-handed, and he cringes. George huffs a laugh a bit, his first smile of the day coming out.

"Wow, you don't even have coins?"

"Shut up, I have \$20, and that's more than what you have," Clay defends himself and George shakes his head.

"Well, you had \$20 and one cent. Now it's just \$20," George said. They stare into the water and Clay's face brightens with an idea. "I don't like that look- what? What are you thinking?"

"You dare me to get you a coin from the fountain?"

George's face pinches together. "What?"

"Do you. Dare me. To get you. A coin. From the-"

"I heard you! Just- why?"

Clay shrugs. "You wanted a coin, and why not?"

"Dream, that's a bad idea and I'm pretty sure you can't climb in the fountain-"

"I'm gonna do it."

"Dream! Seriously don't, you're going to get us in trouble," George said, but he was fighting a grin, and Clay would fight God himself to get George to smile during this time, even though he was a pain in the ass about it.

"Okay..." Clay thought because he did have a point. "Then I won't go in."

"Thank you-"

"I'll just lean over!"

"No, Dream!"

But it was too late and Clay was already leaning forward to where the coins were. One hand was clamped around the cement wall, and the other was reaching out and brushing the top of the cold water. Clay bit the inside of his cheek as he concentrated on keeping his balance, as he reached down into the water. His fingers were just barely brushing the coins. *Come on... just one penny. I'm so close-*

"Oh my god, you're so dumb," George said and Clay's concentration breaks. He couldn't reach it, but his stubbornness didn't want to give up that easily. Clay looked around him before putting together that if he knelt on the wall, he would have more reach. It was dangerous, but whatever.

Clay was a tall guy; this should not be this much of a struggle. He propped himself up, his balance was very off, but he swore that if he moved fast enough, he wouldn't fall. He narrows his focus on a stray penny that was closer to him and he starts to lean forward. George wasn't stopping him. Security wasn't stopping him. He only had a few people watching him curiously.

There we go! He grins to himself and he reaches down to grab it, his hand snatching up the coin confidently. His confidence was short-lived, though, because he moved a little too fast when he sat back up and he rocked forward. *Oh fuck- oh no, oh no, oh no, oh nonononono-*

Clay's arms pinwheel a bit and he tries to catch himself until there's a surprisingly strong tug on the back of his t-shirt, and he's pulled off of the wall.

"Jesus, Dream. Falling in the fountain for a penny and getting us kicked out in the middle of a hurricane- really fucking smart," George said as Clay fixes his shirt. He smirked at his friend and he holds out the coin to him.

"I still got it, though. Checkmate, Georgie," he said and George rolls his eyes.

"You realize that I'm just going to throw it back in, right?"

"Hm, yeah. But I did something cool and you still get to make a wish so," Clay said. George turns the wet coin in his fingers before holding it up to the light like Clay did.

"I wish for..." George's words trail off. "I don't know what to wish for."

"Wish for something good to happen... or something."

"Okay- I wish for something good to happen...or something," George repeats and he tosses the coin in. Clay snorts and gives George a playful nudge.

"You're so stupid, George. I didn't mean actually use that wish," Clay wheezes and George starts to laugh with him.

"What? I didn't have any ideas."

"You could've wished for the hurricane to be over too, so that way, it's like double luck," Clay points out and they begin walking again. This time, the silence was more comfortable and they walked side by side.

"Thank you, for that I mean," George said and Clay looks down at him.

"Don't worry about it," he said and the two make eye contact. "You look awful, by the way."

George's mouth drops open. "Wha-"

"Are you going to like keep my sweatshirt or did you forget you had it?" Clay was just throwing questions out there to keep it from being weird, but he wondered if it was making things weirder. George tilts his head and his friend, grabbing a fistful of the green fabric.

"Do you...want it back...?"

"No! No, it's fine. You can have it. Well, not have it. You can wear it, it looks good. I was just wondering- yeah," Clay said, cutting himself off. His whole body felt like he was on fire and he wished he was actually. Literally anything he said to George was like walking on eggshells. It's like a secret PTSD that would trigger every time he wanted to be friendly with his *friend*.

Clay internally cringes as the memory replays in his mind and George, blissfully unaware, keeps walking next to him.

"So..." Clay said. He was 100% the conversation carrier here and George looked two seconds away from slapping the shit out of Clay.

"What."

"Are you okay?"

"Besides the fact I was forced to go on a walk after being trapped in America during a hurricane? Oh, and you said I looked awful. But other than those things, I'm fine," George said, head bent over his phone as he scrolled through his Twitter feed.

"Hey, you could've been long gone by this point."

"Yeah, but it wouldn't have been fair to you."

"I would've been fine. I have time and my sister's wedding isn't until... holy shit! I forgot to call my sister," Clay gasps and he wastes no time do so. They pull over to the side in front of a store and the phone rings.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Anna!" Clay said and he looks over to George, who was looking at the keychains. "So, funny story..."

As he explains the situation, George circles around him like a shark. He uses his toe to nudge the back of Clay's knees and play's with his suitcases handle, staring into space. It was stressing Clay out. Having George in his bubble was driving him crazy, and he kept taking a few steps away, but his friend would follow.

"George! Relax, go eat your Goldfish or something," Clay finally said when George's arm brushed his as he paced around Clay.

"Wait- George? George is there?!" His sister says to him and Clay quickly turns down his phone volume. *Way to fucking go Clay; now she's going to have questions.*

"No."

"Yes he is, you just said his name. Did y'all ever-"

"No."

"Okay, but what about-"

"No."

"Clay. You gotta let him down easy, and you can't just ignore-"

"No."

"Stop saying no and stop cutting me off!"

"Bye Anna! I'll be there in a few days I'm pretty sure, sorry about not getting there early! I love you!"

"Bye Clay! Stop hiding and talk to George about-" Clay hangs up before she could finish her sentence. He was sweating.

"Why do you look like you're about to cry?" George asked when Clay walked up to where he was sitting. A bag of Goldfish sat on his lap and Clay snatches it up and takes a handful.

"Hmph- 'M not," he said through a mouthful. Even if he was going to cry, it was a stress cry.

"What'd she say?"

"She said not to worry about it and that I had some wiggle room to be late since the wedding isn't until next week," he explained and he sat down on the floor in front of George. This terminal was filled with people and all the seats were taken since the service counter from yesterday was here. They walked one big circle.

"Ah, okay. Well, they're saying the hurricane is supposed to get stronger in the next few days and that the roads were already flooded," George said. Clay let out a long whine and put his head between his knees. George pats his shoulder.

"Don't worry- I'm sure you'll make it in time."

"George, what are we going to do for the days we're here? Sit around? Eat Goldfish?" He asks, giving the Goldfish bag a small punch, and it falls on its side.

George bends over to pick it up. "Don't disrespect my Goldfish like that. Why are you so mad?"

"What- me?! You've been cranky since this morning and either way, I'm mad because I'm supposed to be in New York with my family right now but instead, I'm stuck here with you." The words all come out in a rush and he didn't even realize how bad his thought sounded until George flinched back in surprise.

"I didn't realize I was that annoying to be stuck with," George said quietly and Clay blinked up at him.

"Wait, no. No, I didn't mean it like that. I meant that it sucked I wasn't with my family and that we were stuck here. But I'm glad you stayed, that was a really nice thing to do. You aren't annoying," Clay reassures and George thought about it for a minute before giving him a small smile.

"Right, yeah." George didn't take it personally. They were bound to get annoyed with each other anyway. But Clay's been acting weird since last night and George couldn't tell if he's always been like this and he never noticed it because they rarely saw each other in person, or if something happened that he didn't know about.

Curiosity sparked in George's mind and when he got curious, it was a dangerous game. He studies his friend's face as Clay picks at the dirty carpet and his focus narrows down to a very subtle fact. As Clay sat there in guilt, George noted how he was also gnawing on his bottom lip.

And when Clay chews on his bottom lip, he's thinking. About something. *Something I don't know about*, George pieces together and he finally tears his eyes away from his friend when Clay notices George staring. Something is bothering Clay and George wanted to know. Or help. He didn't know what he wanted to do, but he tucks it in the back of his mind for a future conversation he will definitely be having.

Now it was George's turn to feel Clay's eyes on him. "Dream, why are you staring at me?" *Playing it dumb.*

"Because you were staring at me," Clay answers and George turned his head to find Clay staring very intensely at George. George felt uncomfortable.

"Dude, stop. You look crazy," George said. Clay's blank expression doesn't change and he slowly gets up on his knees- which brings him to George's eye level. *Fucking tall ass weirdo- what is he doing?!*

Clay leans forward slightly. "Stop being grumpy."

George leans back, fighting a blush at how close he was. "You know, I would prefer an apology instead of being called cranky."

"I already said sorry."

"Not really. You hurt my feelings," George said and Clay's eyes soften a bit, but his face stays neutral.

"Did I really?"

George pretended to think. "A little bit, but I don't care. Now back up, idiot."

He pushes Clay away and relaxes again, the warmth on his cheeks slowly fading. Clay snorts a bit and goes back to sitting criss-cross like a kindergartener.

"I promise I didn't mean it like that. I'm sorry," he said. George shrugs and he believed the apology this time. Only a little bit though, he didn't want to give Clay the satisfaction of knowing George was fine.

"Hm, whatever," George said in a bored tone and he pretends to check his phone. He sees Clay's mouth drop open in disbelief.

"Wha- George, you're so...I can't believe you. You can't just ask for an apology and then say 'Whatever' to it!" Clay said. George swallows a giggle while a slow smile breaks through.

"You can and I just did," he responds.

"You are so annoying."

"Yes, that's what you called me before."

"Oh my God, stop guilt-tripping me!"

"Maybe if you apologize again, I will."

"I- George, I just did. What am I to you? An apology factory?" George gives him a look and Clay grunts out: "Ugh, nevermind. I don't want you to answer that."

George folds his arms in victory and slides down in his chair, resting his feet on Clay's knee like the king he is. His friend was laughing, which made George happy.

"Get your disgusting shoes off of me-" Clay wheezes as he shoves George's feet off.

"They are not disgusting. They're Nikes," George said with some pride. Clay rolls his eyes at him, but George didn't take any offense since he was talking to the guy that wore the same beat-up tennis shoes every day. He was anything but threatened.

The day continues to, painfully may Clay add, drag on. George seemed out of his funk though, which made it a little more enjoyable, but it was a curse. Clay knew he was slipping, though. He knew George was getting suspicious since his weird-ass friend would practically study Clay like a book whenever the conversation died. He was slipping since; apparently, there was a considerable difference between keeping it from George for twenty minutes and then having to keep it from him while it was always in his face.

Clay watched in disgusted amazement as George added yet another Goldfish to his already filled mouth. The day was ending when Clay dared George to fit as much Goldfish in his as he could

since he pulled that stunt at the fountain earlier. George- never wanting to back down from a dare that easy- was doing it and it was crazy.

"You're sick. You know that, right?" Clay said as George finally gave in.

"Mmph- you're impressed," George said, chewing his mouthful.

"No. Not at all and in fact, I'm exhausted- so can we please find somewhere less crowded to sleep?"

"How are you tired, we haven't done anything all day."

"I don't know, man. At least sleeping makes the time go by faster," Clay suggests and George makes a noise of agreement. In a peaceful silence, the two walked back to their quiet terminal from the night before and took their rightful place in the back corner. Clay tosses his 'pillow' down to the ground and stretches out, arms crossed behind his head and eyes already closed.

"Scooch," George orders. Clay opens a lazy eye at him, but wiggles over and watches George carefully set his bag down next to Clay.

"Well, well, well. Look who decided to come to the floor."

"Shut up, Dream. I just feel bad for you since you look stupid laying on the floor," George tried to retort. The keyword was tried.

"...So you're joining me? Wouldn't that make you stupid too?"

There was a long pause. "Whatever."

Clay lets out a small wheeze and George lays next to him, arms folded. George, after all this time, still had his hoodie on but Clay couldn't bring himself to care. *Helping a homie out, nothing to it-* is what he's been saying, trying to convince himself that. It was tough to do, though, when his heart and mind always fought each other whenever he even thought about George.

Let's make one thing clear- Clay did not like George in that way at all. Or at least that's what Clay thought because again, last year's event proved him wrong, but he was far from ready to acknowledge it or even act on his feelings. George was a friend who made an idiotic decision and Clay was protecting both of them, and just because George made it very distinct that he was not kidding about-

"Jesus, how did you do this last night?" George mumbled, trying to fluff up his shitty backpack with holes. *This guy can literally buy supreme shirts but not use a new bag.*

"I stuffed my bag," Clay mutters through sleep.

"I hate this."

"Me too."

"You can't talk, you have all your shit here and you're seconds away from sleeping," George said. *Aaaaand grumpy pants is back.* Clay wakes up and looks at his friend through the darkness of the airport.

"Okay. What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing, I guess. You can't do much anyway."

"George-"

"What?"

I barely got my sentence out dude. "C'mere. Just use my arm, I don't care." Clay lays his arm out and George stares at it.

"Why would I do that?"

"Because you look super tired and you won't shut up until the problems fixed and I am about to pass out so please- for the love of God, just use my arm as a pillow," Clay begs. There's another long stretch of silence and then a long sigh draws out.

"Fine- just don't make it weird," his friend says and Clay feels George gently lay his head down. It was a really awkward position and Clay didn't really like it, but George didn't say anything.

Eventually, George finds a somewhat comfortable spot, after balancing on Clay's arm, and the two fall asleep. But it was after he spent a solid ten minutes staring at the ceiling. There's been a small pull at his chest and knew what the feeling was, but he's been constantly pushing it back and away because- one, he knew the answer himself since he knew Clay like the back of his hand. Two, no one else knew about him. Not his parents, not Clay, not his dog- and hell, he hasn't even said the word out loud to *himself* since he figured it out.

George was just beginning to sleep when Clay stirred and George held perfectly still. He held his breath as his friend wiggled his arm underneath George's neck and for a second, George debated on whether or not he should let Clay take his arm back or if he should just keep holding still. But before he could make a choice, Clay's arm wraps around George's shoulders and pulls him into a bear hug against his chest and *holy fuck George was dying*. He couldn't move. Clay was holding him like a pillow and George didn't really want to move away. It was honestly a lot more comfortable with his head resting on Clay's shoulder.

Despite the warm fuzzies in his chest, George's gut had a heavy feeling. He couldn't tell if it was all the Goldfish he shoved in his mouth, or if it some warning from the universe telling him something wasn't right. Lightning flashed, and a deep rumble of thunder followed, shaking the windows slightly and causing George to jump a bit. It seems like the universe answered that for him.

Chapter Notes

I DO NOT CONDONE DRINKING PLEASE BE SAFE GUYS IF YOU DRINK
DRINK RESPONSIBLY

Close.

Oh God, they were so close.

Clay hasn't been much of a drinker. He's never really gotten this drunk before, ever. Never ever. But George. God, George. George had this effect on him that made him act stupid, and his breath smelled so fruity, and Clay wanted some. He wanted to have fun at this dumb New Year's party. Except, he doesn't really remember who was here or why his thumbs were brushing against George's cheekbones. His body was buzzing, and his chest felt so warm, his vision swimming slightly as he tried to focus on George's beautiful brown eyes. George. George made him crazy.

George giggled and shied away from Clay's hands, lifting the red cup to his mouth.

"Stop that," George said, grinning. But he didn't move away. Their knees were glued together, and George leaned against Clay before taking another long sip of the sweet alcohol. Clay didn't drink or at least tried not to. But he swoops the cup from George and takes a sip, the back of his throat burning.

"Stop what?" He coughs. George giggles again. George was a very giggly and happy person when he was drunk; Clay found out. A complete contrast to how closed off he was sober and Clay loved both George's. He loved George.

"Stop...I dunno. Being you?"

"You're an idiot."

"Hm, yeah. But you love me," George mumbles, and Clay chuckles. He did. He did, he did, he did.

"No. I hate you. You're dumb and you smell," Clay says anyway. He flicks the center of George's forehead.

"Well, at least I love you then."

Clay scoffs. "Spare me."

"No, actually. I love you," George said. A quiet giggle follows and Clay gives him a weird look, a slow smile spreading on his face.

"What? What are you talking about?"

"Oh c'mon, you're not serious, are you?" George asks, taking the cup from Clay's hand and placing it on the table in front of them. "You haven't noticed? I thought I was being clear."

"George, you can barely make eye contact with the camera on stream. Being clear with your...um, what is it called? Feelings! Being clear with your feelings isn't something you're good at," Clay said. His stomach was doing flips and he was sweating under this stupid sweatshirt. Clay peels it off and places it in his lap as George responds with:

"And? I'm allowed to have feelings still."

"You think you're bold, but your version of bold is practically nonexistent still," Clay points out, and George looks at the ceiling, thinking.

"Let me be bold now then," George said. Clay raised an unamused eyebrow at his friend. "Give me your sweatshirt."

"Why?"

"I want to use it as a napkin, obviously. Because I'm cold, Dream. What else am I gonna use it for?" Clay rolls his eyes, shoving the material into his friend's chest.

"How bold of you, Georgie," Clay teases, watching George pull the hood off of his brown hair-leaving it messy. Clay reaches out and fixes it, running his fingers through George's surprisingly soft hair. George closes his eyes.

"That feels nice- keep going," he orders. Clay grins and tugs on his hair, making George wince in pain.

"In your dreams. Now, are you all bold-ed out? Can we go back to the party?"

"I don't want to. I like it better here," George said. Clay looks around the dim yellow living room with the mute TV playing across from them. There was muffled chatter and laughs in the other room, but no one made any moves to get them. Why not stay? He was with George. He liked George. He loved George.

"Okay. Yeah. We can stay a little longer," Clay agrees. "But you have to promise me you're gonna stop bein' fake bold. You're just proving my point."

George laughs, face lighting up in a smile and the warmth in Clay's chest grows up to his face. George's cheeks were flushed with pink and his eyes looked so open.

"Why don't you be bold for once? You're all talk," George said. Clay, never wanting to back away from taunts, sits up straighter.

"You're the one that wanted to be bold in the first place."

"So show me how it's done, Dream. How else do I make my feelings for you clearer?"

"You mean your drunken fake feelings? I dunno, it sounds like your problem," Clay wheezes out. George's face falls a bit and he turns to look at Clay directly in the eyes.

"You need glasses or something," George said in a low voice. Clay listened very carefully, not daring to look away. "Because I'm being serious."

"No. No way," Clay shakes his head and George straightens up to Clay's height. Or about. George was very short and Clay felt like he could crush him if he stepped on his foot or something. Anyways, it was hard to believe his friend. George was the most 'no homo' person he's ever met; all of this was so sudden.

"Dream..."

"George. Think about your next words carefully," Clay warns. There's a brief mental standoff between them, and George's eyes trail down to Clay's lips. Fuck it- you know? Only one way to find things out. Clay reaches out to him, one hand on the back of George's neck, and dips his head down to George's mouth. George falls into him and they kiss, a million pops bursting in Clay's chest.

Close.

They were so close.

George deepens the kiss by tilting their heads, a finger tracing Clay's jawline and it makes him shudder. Clay could barely breathe. George tasted fruity from the drink and they seemed to fit perfectly together. George moves his hand from Clay's jaw to his hand, locking their fingers together. Clay wanted to sit here all night like this, kissing his best friend, but he needed to breathe.

Clay pulls away, his vision blurred everything except George's half-closed eyes. God, it was euphoria. Clay tried to still his pounding heart and he tried to keep his breathing quiet, adrenaline and booze running cold through his veins. They did that. And they were still close. George in that green hoodie, practically drowning in it, and their hands still locked together. George presses his forehead against Clay's, that dumb but stunning grin on his face. The realization hit Clay first, and even though he really wanted to do that again, he was sobering up and a cold regret started to form in his stomach. He placed a soft kiss on George's cheek and stood up, muttering something about going back to the party, and George held on to his hand until he moved too far away.

Clay had the realization of his actions that night, the kiss sobering him up enough to piece together the memory the following morning. George never had that. He woke up completely unaware of what happened except for the pounding headache he was left with. Clay was left with a different headache.

But as Clay stirred from his sleep, holding a sleeping George tightly to his chest, he realized another thing: He wanted to be that close again. Drunk words are sober thoughts- that's what they say.

Had he been wrong this whole time? Has he always had this small longing for his friend, and he's always refused to see the facts? He didn't know. He wanted to know, though, and they were alone together again, but he wanted to be sober this time. He didn't want to hide behind the alcohol again. As he thought when he first kissed George- there was only one way to find things out.

George was awake before Clay, so that saved an awkward explanation on why his friend had droll on his shoulder. It was early, though, and the airport was still with sleep, nothing but the dull hum of the air conditioning and rain keeping George company.

He felt horrible. His body was stiff from the floor, and his clothes felt dirty- he didn't even want to see what his hair looked like. He runs a hand through it, wincing at how...blah it felt, and he looked down at his friend. He looked perfect, and it made George so mad. His blonde hair was perfect. His clothes didn't look wrinkled or gross, and even though George did have his nose buried into Clay's shoulder, his friend didn't smell awful. He hated it. But Clay did have all his things and George was stuck with nothing.

"Hey, Dream," George whispers, jabbing his friend in the stomach. George knew Clay was a light sleeper, and he also knew he could annoy Clay enough to cough up a spare shirt for George.

"Mmmmm?" Clay hums out, not bothering to open his eyes.

"Can I steal a shirt?" Another poke. Clay blindly waves his hand and turns to his side, back facing George.

"I don't care," Clay said. It wasn't a no, and George spent two minutes trying to get his friend's suitcase open, palming around for the zipper before grabbing fistfuls of fabric. He lifts, what he thinks, is a pale yellow t-shirt to the morning light and quietly stalks to the bathroom. There was a small coffee shop next to the bathroom that sat a couple, talking to each other peacefully in hushed tones as the man held a sleeping baby to his chest. They looked worried. George kept his head down as he walks by, and their conversation dies when he does. There's that all too familiar feeling creeping up George's spine, but he ignores it.

The bathroom was dark- like pitch black. As soon as the door shut behind him, he was plunged into black, and as he slapped the wall for the light switch. The lights never turn on. He flicks the switch again and waits. Nothing happens.

He flicks it back and forth quickly. Nothing happens.

He groans and waves his arms in a big circle, trying to see if the lights were motion-sensitive. There was a small click, and George jumped around, desperately waving his arms to get the lights on. It was a hopeless tactic and he knew the lights weren't going to turn on at this point. He defeatedly changes his shirt and refolds Clay's hoodie carefully before wrestling with the door to get it open, and he blinks at how bright it was in the hall compared to the bathroom.

"Sir?" A voice calls as George heads back. He turns to the couple sitting in the empty coffee shop. "You wouldn't happen to have a phone on you? Or...or a charger? Like a battery?"

George shakes his head. He left his things back with Clay since he thought it was going to be a quick trip, but no. He had to fight with the dead lights.

"Ugh, okay. It's just... the power died a few hours ago, and our phones are almost dead. Do you know any information on the storm then? We heard they were bumping it up to a category three, and we're trying to decide if it's worth booking a hotel," the woman says. George blinks in shock. *Catagory three?! Power outage? You're joking- are we going to rot in here...?*

"Uh- no. No, I don't. My friend might though; he's been trying to keep up with it-"

"Oh god- you aren't from here, you poor thing," she says and notes his accent. She completely cut George off, even though he was gracing her with his help. He could've been eating his Goldfish by now. "Where you from?"

"...London," George sighs. He wasn't escaping them any time soon, huh?

"Wow. London. What brought you here?"

"Distant family."

"Aw. Well, I'm sorry you got stuck here in Florida. I hope you get back home," she winces. "I hope you and your boyfriend aren't driving each other crazy. Like some people are..." There's a look thrown to the man, but George was too busy short-circuiting to even care about the joke.

"Boyfriend- no. No, no, no. We aren't together, he's just my friend," George rushes to explain, his face burning. The woman starts to apologize, and then the baby begins to whine, making her turn away from George. The man gives him an apologetic nod and a quick thanks. He stood there like an idiot, watching the baby's whines build-up to cries, and his heart was racing. Had they really seemed- ew. Ew. EW! What? No. That's so- no. I don't even- wow.

George makes his way back, surprised to see Clay wide awake and on his phone. George walks up and snatches it out of his hands.

"Dude- these are like gold right now, don't use it," George warns. Clay snatches his phone back.

"What are you talking about?"

"The power is out, dumbass!" George snaps.

"...No way."

"Way," George said and he throws his bag on the seat next to Clay. He starts to shove his dirty clothes in his backpack. "I was stuck in that stupid bathroom, trying to get the lights to turn on and then this couple tried to talk to me and asked if I had a phone and she said the power was out and that the hurricane is now a category three-" George runs out of breath and he sucks in a quick breath.

"It's so bad," he mumbles. He digs his palms in his eyes, and he can feel Clay's eyes watching him, his friend sitting there and not uttering a single word.

"George, it's okay," Clay said quietly. George feels a hand on his shoulder, but he doesn't move his hands away from his face.

"We're stuck here! We're never leaving!"

"We are! Don't think about it- you can never fully trust what the weatherman says anyways. What else did the people say?" Clay asks.

"I don't know. They had this baby, and they thought we were dating," George said in the most miserable tone he could muster up. He was sick of it. He hated it here. He didn't even realize that Clay was oddly silent after he said that, and he peeks over at Clay.

His friend was fighting an evil grin. "They thought... they thought we were dating?"

"Yes," George said. His face burns, so he hides it in his hands again while Clay laughs.

"Oh my god- seriously? Ha! You're- haha!" Clay couldn't even get the words out, which didn't make George feel better.

"Stooooop," George draws out. Clay pulls him into a quick side hug, jokingly pressing his cheek into George's rat-ass hair.

"Oooh, Georgie! It'll be okay, we have each other at least," Clay teases. George was on fire. His face was blistering. This sucked and he wanted to throw himself out the window and into the hurricane.

"Okay! Whatever," George said and he twists out of Clay's hug. "Just shut up, you freak."

"I think that is hilarious that people think we're dating," Clay giggles. George glares at him, and it takes every cell in his body not to mention that Clay was the one who forced George to cuddle last night.

"I really don't know why they even think that in the first place. I literally hate you," George adds. Clay rolls his eyes, a bright smile on his face.

"No, you don't."

George blows a raspberry with his tongue. "You and what army?"

"George-" Clay wheezes, the smile growing even brighter. George finds himself grinning along. "George, what was that? That doesn't even- ha! That doesn't even make sense!"

George blows another raspberry, which makes Clay laugh harder. The two keep adding onto the stupid joke- Clay, at one point, mimicking George's noise- and they fall into a comfortable laughing fit. The constant rain and thunder stopped bothering them as the cracked jokes in the morning, trying throwing Goldfish into each other's mouths from crazy distances and cheering loudly when one of them caught the snack. It wasn't until the afternoon when they sat down next to each other again, Clay laying his legs across George's armrests so George could use them to prop up his phone as he tried to look up more information on the storm. Clay was on a quick phone call with his sister and was, very annoyingly, repeating the information George was giving him back into the phone. Word for word.

"Dream! Is that necessary?" George said, hitting Clay's sneaker. Clay cocks an eyebrow, but doesn't respond.

"Okay. Mhm. Sure," Clay says, and George unties his shoes. "Okay, hang on-" Clay mutes his phone microphone and looks at George. "George, you are two seconds away from losing my leg privilege."

George makes eye contact before very slowly tying his friend's shoelaces together. Clay swings his legs off of George, making sure to kick George's knees on the way down.

"Ow- what the hell?" George said, rubbing his knees. "You're so dumb."

"Say that again- hang on, Anna!" Clay shouts into his phone, and he puts a silencing finger up to George. "Sorry, I had to deal with something-"

"You're dumb. An idiot. A dumbass. Stupid. Pissbaby," George said. Clay's face drops, and there was silence as Anna unknowingly rambled to her brother about something. Her brother wasn't paying any attention, though. George and him were locked in another stare-off.

"You have ten seconds to run," Clay dares. George narrows his eyes.

"Or what? You're going to hit me? I'm so scared," George mocks him, waving his hands in fake fear. Clay smirks.

"Do you want to find out?"

"...No." George's heart starts pounding.

"Go. Ten seconds starts now," Clay said. George doesn't get up, though. He refused to be scared of this six-foot-something man child that played a lego game for fun. He would not allow himself to feel this much adrenaline with an empty threat-

"Seven. Six. Five-" Clay counts down, and George jumps out of his seat, scrambling around the corner. He can barely hear a hasty goodbye to Anna, and he turns. Clay was already out of the chair and George yelps, taking rapid steps backward to make more distance. Clay takes a step- and he stumbles. *Ha! The man-child tripped!* George thought gleefully. His shoelace trick worked and Clay bent down to fix them, buying George more time.

George barked out a laugh, saluting his friend with two fingers. "Adios, Dreamie."

"Don't get too cocky!" Clay shouts after him, but George was already gone. He was speedwalking/jogging through the airport, the crowd thinning out the further he went back and away. George kept throwing his head back, checking for his psycho friend, who he would always catch a glimpse of. But he was always just out of sight.

Eventually, George runs into a dead end. In fact, it was the terminal he found when he was trying to find Clay when his flight got canceled. There weren't any workers, and a large white tarp hung down to separate the actual airport from the construction. George hesitated since he was, like, 80% sure it was against some kind of rule to go into this place while it wasn't completed.

"Oh, George-" Clay calls from around the corner. He was close- *Oh God, UM- okay, okay. If Clay could do that fountain thing, surely I can just duck in here?*

With a small hiss of breath, George pulls back the tarp and slides between the flaps. Just like the bathroom, it was very dark in this area. A wall of glass in front of him was the only thing that provided some light and the rain was extra loud here. George's quiet steps still managed to echo on the concrete floor as he moved around planks of wood and drywall. He looked up to the skeletal ceiling and walls, lightning exposing wires hanging down as it flashed. The place was a mess and he held his breath as he saw Clay's shadow move by him from the other side of the tarp. *What an idiot...*

George walks to the window and places his palm on the cold glass. Raindrops race behind it and he could feel the wall shudder as a gust of wind blows. It was hard to imagine that this storm could get worse. As George walks along the window to the other side of the room, there's a gentle clang of metal, and he freezes.

Oh shit. Oh shit. It's security. I'm done for- oh my god, I'm such an idiot! Should I say something, or should I just wait for him to find me? Or her. Or them. Argh- George, stop panic thinking!

George whips his head around to the noise. "Hello...?"

No response.

"Dream, I swear to god, if that's you..." he says. He was whispering but the room carried the words

and he cringed when it seemed like he was yelling. There's another scuffling noise, and he squints into the dark. *Maybe it's mice? Or rats?* "Clay?"

"Hello?" George said again and he takes slow steps to the noises. "I...I got a bit lost. I'm sorry." He was lying to who- or what- ever was in here, but if it was security, he was saving his ass. George could use his foreigner card pretty well, too.

George kicks a metal bucket filled with rainwater, and he jumps, a small yell escaping his lips. His heart was in his ears and he could barely hear the rain anymore. George looks around him one more time before making long strides to the tarp, wanting to get the absolute fuck out of there. No way was he doing this. He was not about to be a horror movie character in the middle of a category two hurricane.

He reaches for the tarp and starts to pull it when he feels a hand clamp around his mouth and another arm wraps around his stomach, pulling him backward and back into the vacant room.

George almost passes out from fear, his limbs paralyzed, and thoughts were going crazy. He thrashes against the strong arms, and he resorts to licking the person's hand, and that's what sets him free.

"Ugh- dude! Did you just lick my hand, you disgusting pig?" Clay groans, wiping his hand on George's arm.

"Clay! What the fuck! You just gave me a bloody heart attack!" George yells angrily, giving Clay a shove.

"Whoa! Using bloody now, are we? Someone's extra British today," Clay said.

"Shut the fuck up."

"George- c'mon. It was kind of funny," his friend snorts and he points to the dark corners of the room. "You have no idea how hard it was to sneak around you. You kept walking back and forth and- oh my god. When you started *talking*?! That was so funny, I had to pinch myself to keep from laughing-" Clay sentence ends with a gentle wheeze.

"Whatever. You didn't have to grab me like a kidnapper and make me pee myself," George responds, anger melting slightly. Clay giggles and moves behind George. "What are you-"

"Look, look, look. Ready?" Clay whispers. George feels arms wrap around him, and then he's yanked to Clay's chest. "Hey, Georgie. I'm gonna kill you. It's me, the security guard."

Clay's voice was in George's ear, and his skin pricked with goosebumps. "I am not scared of the security guard, Dream."

"Really? Sounded like you were trying to pull an excuse out of your ass back there," Clay whispers and George felt a mixture of disgust and embarrassment. He was. He was trying to get himself out of trouble.

"Well, forgive me for not wanting to get us kicked out," George whispers back. Clay's laugh is low in his ear and George cringes as his skin continued to prick. "Can you not talk in my ear?"

There's a pause. "What do you mean?" Clay said obnoxiously into his ear, and getting closer so George could feel his friend's gross breath on his neck. George swats Clay's head and pulls himself away and out of Clay's arms.

"Don't be weird."

"That was fun but-" Clay said, turning on his heel and walking to the tarp. "-We have to head back. I left all our stuff back there and I don't know if someone took it."

"You're so dumb!"

"Hey- be nice because you're going to help me with something."

"Uh, no. I think you owe *me* for that heart attack," George said as the two walk back. Clay shakes his head, which prompts George to ask: "What? What is it anyway?"

"My sister wants me to practice dancing so I won't embarrass her at the wedding- *if* I even make it."

"So? Do you want me to play music or something?"

Clay considers this. "Hm. No. I told her that you took dancing classes a while ago with your mom-"

"Okay- wait. I was forced to do those classes. I did it to fill in for my dad while he was out of town," George said. Setting the record straight, he did not want to do those classes. It was awkward, but it made his mom happy, and he wanted her to be pleased with him again. That's why he did it. Clay knew this.

"Dude, it doesn't matter. The point is that you know how to dance and my sister thinks I'm going to embarrass her, and I want to prove her wrong," Clay sighed, squaring his shoulders like he was building confidence up. "I wanted you to teach me."

"You want me to teach you how to dance?" George deadpans.

"Yes."

"No. No way."

"What?! Why?"

"One, it was years ago. Two, I'm not sure I even know how to teach someone," George said. They make it back to their, thankfully, untouched things and retake seats next to each other.

"It'll be like five minutes. I'm a fast learner, too! I already know vaguely what I'm doing; I just need to make sure I'm right, you know? I promise we won't mention this ever again," Clay pleads, and George rolls his eyes.

"No!"

"George, please. This is my sister's wedding, and it means so much to me," his friend said. George sneaks a glance and Clay was giving him a hopeful grin. "Please? For Anna?"

George mentally kicks himself for giving in. "Fine. But it's for Anna, okay?"

"For Anna, got it." George nods at him and the two awkwardly stare at each other.

"Are you going to get the music or-"

"Wait- can we not do it here? Do you want to go back to that place?" Clay asks, eyeing the people sleeping and sitting quietly in their chairs. *Oh...right.*

"I don't want to get in trouble, though," George shrugs, and Clay slouches over in frustration.

"We won't get in trouble. Now stop being a baby and come on," Clay urges, shooting up and grabbing his suitcase. George reluctantly grabbed his bag and got up. They were going to have to walk all that way back to that creepy room, and now he was going to teach Clay how to dance. He was going to mark this day down as the weirdest one he's ever had.

Clay knew exactly what he was doing. He did actually need the dancing help, don't get him wrong- that was an actual conversation he had with his sister while George was too busy doing George things on his phone. Except Clay was in *Operation: Find out if I actually like George or if I'm just confusing myself* mode. It just so happens that the dancing thing lined up with helping him figure out his emotions. It was the perfect opportunity to get understandably close with his friend and see if he could read George that easily again- like he did the night they kissed.

They spent a few minutes with a dry conversation, George putting on his phone's flashlight and setting it down on a stack of plywood while Clay searched for music. There was a slight awkwardness in the air, but that was purely from George, Clay decided. There was nothing wrong with helping out a friend, repressed memories or not.

"Okay!" Clay said, clapping his hands. "Now what?"

"Um- okay. Let me see your hands," George orders. Clay holds out his hands, noting how George hesitantly stared down at them before holding his. George locks their fingers as he holds up a pair of their hands, and George wraps Clay's arm around him, sliding his hand way up his back. It was a bit uncomfortable since Clay's elbow was too high, and he had no doubt it looked a bit weird.

"Isn't that a little too high-"

"Stop talking."

Clay's mouth snaps shut. He knew doing this was pushing the line for George and he didn't want to make his friend any more uncomfortable. George drapes his arm over Clay's shoulder and refuses to meet his eyes.

"Okay.... now we just sway."

"Sway?"

George nods once. "Sway."

Neither of them talked as Clay let George guide him for a little bit until he got the hang of it. Warm instruments swirled in the air around them and the rain lightened up, loud downpour turning into gentle drops as they swayed. George was a million feet away from him though, and that's when Clay notices the shirt George stole from him.

"Wow, green? It's almost like you're copying me," Clay says. George looks down and his face scrunched in confusion.

"I thought it was yellow?"

"It's green, dude. A light green."

"Ugh- a gross color."

"It is not!" Clay says defensively. George was the one that stayed in his *green* hoodie for like three

days.

"It is. It's the color of snot and garbage and it's gross," George said and Clay can feel the tension relax out of George's shoulders. Clay starts to lead them, spinning them in a slow circle to the rhythm of the violins.

"Okay, first of all, you don't know that. But at least it's not blue."

"What's wrong with blue?" George's eyes finally look up to his. Clay feels like he ate syrup or something.

"It's a basic color. Everyone likes blue," Clay said simply.

"Blue is one of the only colors I can see, you asshole."

Clay snorts, baring his teeth in a wince. "That must suck."

George scoffs with an eye roll and they keep dancing. George eventually relaxes completely, and they talk about the storm in gentle tones, Clay filling the silence with stories of him during the other hurricanes. At the same time, George listens politely, with his gaze drifting from Clay to the windows.

"One time," Clay starts another story with a small laugh. "We were in the middle of a pretty bad one and I got mad at my mom for something and I ran outside. I laid in the grass in the pour raining and thunder while my mom yelled at me to come back inside."

"Oh my god. How much trouble did you get into?"

Clay shrugs up one shoulder. "Eh. Not that much. She had to put on her raincoat and boots and come get me though, so she wasn't that happy."

George giggles and shakes his head. "So, you've always been stupid."

"Stew-pid," Clay mimics George's accent back to him. George nudges him with his shoulder in annoyance, but that brought him closer to Clay. So close, that if Clay squinted enough, he could see George's faint freckles across his nose and cheekbones.

The two lock eyes again. Despite his stomach feeling weird and fluttery, Clay's heartbeat stayed strong and steady. George studies him because that's what George does when he's trying to figure out something. That's something Clay has picked up over years of friendship with him, and it's something he's always admired about him. George would study something for hours to figure it out.

He wanted George to study him for hours. He wanted to stay right here and have George keep looking at him. Clay slowly stops them until they're standing still, George's eyes flicking around Clay's face. Gentle thunder sounds in the distance and lightning flashes, casting George's face in quick light, and Clay could see George think. The music was still playing softly in the background as Clay, as slow as a snail, leaned in a bit and he dared George to do something.

Come on. Say something. Call me an idiot, shove me away, Clay tries to communicate to his friend, but George stays put. He stays put until the music ends, and they're left staring into each other just inches apart. Neither of them dares to breathe, and Clay's eyes move down to George's lips.

"You think you have it now?" George's voice cracks a bit from whispering. Clay nods, not looking away.

"Yeah. I do."

George pulls away, and Clay's arms fall to his side, the moment ending. "Good. You're not as good as me, but you'll get there."

And they were back. "Okay, sure. Even though I added much more to the dance."

"Spinning in circles just made me feel sick," George retorted. "That wasn't worth it and now we have to walk alllll the way back."

"Stop complaining- not like there's anything else to do."

The two grab their phones and things, walking back to their makeshift area. For people stuck in a confined space, they did a shit ton of walking.

Walking was okay though, because that meant Clay got to process everything that happened. He felt like he was walking on air, and he would catch himself with a small smile on his face that he had to keep swallowing down to avoid looking crazy in public. Clay was so close that time. The crazy thing was that he still had no idea where he stood with George since his friend was pretty much emotionally unavailable, a completely different story from Clay, who always made his feelings known. Except for one emotion. But he'll figure it out, he has to and he definitely has the time.

One thing for sure is that Clay would get an answer before they parted ways again, and he'll take whatever answer George was going to give him because they were friends first. Even if Clay still felt this tug at his heartstrings, he never ever wanted to lose George.

The day pushes on and Clay's eyes drift to George's face, who was busy rambling about something his friend Ponk did, and he lets himself smile. *He never ever wanted to lose George.*

Chapter Notes

school started for me <3

also sorry if this chap is kinda shitty, I've been writing essays nonstop for English and my brain is fried by the time i get around to writing this. i still hope you enjoyed though!!!!

"Dream, stop. You're going to hurt yourself."

"Says you."

George rolls his eyes and puts his chin in his hand, shining his phone flashlight at his dumbass of a friend. It's been three hours into their all-nighter, and Clay was already too bold with his parkour skills on the escalator. Putting way too much faith, in George's opinion, in the power outage despite them announcing that they were trying to get the backup generators running. George was just praying they didn't get them working while Clay was jumping off of it. It would've been a hilariously terrible situation.

"Okay- ready? I'm gonna jump from here," Clay says, pointing down to his feet and to the floor that was a decent amount of steps underneath him. "To there."

"You're going to break your ankles. Or your legs. Maybe both," George said. Clay chuckles before launching himself off of the stair, landing heavily on his feet with a loud thud in the quiet, and then pumps his fists in the air in victory. George winces as his friend gives a loud whoop and wastes no time going a step *higher* from his previous jump.

"You're such an idiot. You're going to wake up the whole airport with how loud you are," George says as his friend jumps down again, his arms held out to keep his balance as he wobbles for a second.

"I'm having fun unlike you," Clay responds. He was almost halfway up the dead escalator, and he was really starting to make George nervous with his jumping. "At least I'm not sitting on the bench like a loser."

"Okay- can you at least do something less...dangerous?" George was eyeing the sharp stairs underneath Clay, and even though it was funny the first four stairs, his friend was bound not to make one of these jumps.

Clay leans against the rail. "Like?"

"Slide down the railing? I don't know. I just really don't want to report a dead body to security after you slip," George says, only half-joking.

"That's so sweet of you! I can't believe you care about me," Clay mocks. Alas, he does listen to George after taking a minute to look at the number of stairs he had to jump, and he hops up on the railing and slides down it.

"Thanks."

"No prob," Clay jokes with a thumbs up. "Anything for you."

"Okay, Dream," George scoffs, and that earned him a gentle wheeze from Clay, who takes a seat next to him on the bench. George's left side buzzes when Clay gently leans against him, their shoulders pressed together.

There's a nudge as Clay says: "I bet you wish you took those flights back, huh?"

"Not really, I liked seeing the rain."

"Don't even lie to me like that, George!"

"What?! I'm serious. I like the rain. Plus, England rarely gets storms like these, so it was an experience. The rain also stopped like hours ago, so I'm sure flights are going to start opening back up."

"Knowing Florida airports, you're probably right," God, George could hear the pettiness drip in Clay's voice. "They'll want everyone out of here as soon as possible so they won't get sued."

"How can they get sued? It's not their fault that a hurricane held us here."

"Trust me. People will find a way."

"It's been...what? Four, five days?" George asks, and he only gets a shrug in response. *Where did the time go?*

"But, hey, I can now scratch this off of my bucket list!" Clay says, giving another playful shove to George. George turns to him with a weird look.

"Actually?"

Clay looks at him, a matching look on his face. "No! Obviously not. I was making a joke."

"Oh, hm. A shitty joke, in my opinion."

"Your opinion is shitty."

"How can an opinion be shitty? It's an opinion."

"Yeah, but it's yours, and that's what makes it shitty."

"Weren't you the guy who pissed his bed?" George deadpans. Clay's eyes widen, and his jaw slacks a bit in surprise, small huffs of laughter coming out, and it makes his shoulders bounce a bit. It was kind of cute.

"George!" Clay manages to say between laughter.

"Don't 'George!' me! You're the one who started it," George points out, and Clay throws his head back in a dramatic eye roll.

"Oh, come on now. You totally started it- you called my joke shitty."

"I was stating a fact. You can't get mad at me for telling the truth," George says as Clay's laughter dies. Clay's eyes slide from George's and then down to the floor, a ghost of a smile on his face.

"That's true. But you still started it, and that's all that matters," Clay said. George giggles but doesn't respond because it was sound logic, and arguing with Clay was like talking to a brick wall. *Haha, good one- brick wall because brick is made out of clay, and his name is Clay. I got to tell him that some other time,* George thought, and he grins to himself. Sometimes, his mind amazed him with what he could come up with.

"What? What are you smiling at?" Clay asks, stealing George's phone and shining it directly into George's eyes.

"Ow! Holy sh-" George says as he buries his palms into his burning eyes.

"Shit! Sorry- I'm sorry, are you okay?" Clay winces and reaches out for George's wrists, gently pulling one of his hands away from his eye. He had those weird black spots in his eyes, and when he tried to turn back to his friend, Clay still had it pointing into his face.

George cries out again and pushes Clay's arm up. "Fuckin- move the light, Dream! You're still pointing it into my face."

"Sorry! I just want to know what you were smiling at..."

"Okay, well, can you do it without blinding me?" George snaps. He rubs his eyes as the light shifts a bit, peeking up at Clay, who had his teeth bared in another wince. As his vision adjusts to the dark again, Clay gently lays the phone down on the bench with the light beaming up to the high ceiling.

"I just thought of a joke, that's it," George explains.

"What was the joke?"

George sighs and puts his elbows on his knees. "I don't even remember anymore."

"...On the bright side, the face you made when I blinded you was pretty funny."

"Your face is funny."

"That doesn't even make sense."

"You don't make sense."

"Shut up, George. You're so annoying," Clay said. Despite the harsh words, his friend's tone was warm, and he had a smile that made his eyes scrunch up. George found himself grinning back, holding eye contact for a few more seconds before turning his attention to his phone.

"Watch-" George commands, and he puts his hands above the light, tilting his head up to watch the shadows of his fingers wiggle across the ceiling.

"George, do you even know how to do hand puppets?" Clay says after a few moments of silence. George, in all honesty, didn't know. He thought he was playing it off well by just lowering and lifting his hands above the light and making his hands move in erratic patterns.

No use in lying now. "Not really."

"Here- you mind?" Clay asks, and George glances down to him, finding his friend's hands hovering over George's.

George's mouth dries up. "Yeah. I mean, no. No, I don't mind."

Clay's hands slowly wrap around his, lifting and placing his fingers in odd forms, and he quietly mutters instructions to George- ordering to keep this finger up and then leaving the other down. George couldn't help but watch in a slight trance as his friend's cold hands seem to burn against his, sending jolts of electricity up his arms and straight to his heart. He had that same adrenaline rush he got from the dancing lesson. The one that made his head dizzy and his face warm. George dares to meet Clay's eyes, but his friend was too focused on fixing his hands to notice his longing gaze. Clay hunched over, biting the inside of his lip, and then as he straightens his back and smiled at his work- that's when George finally looked away.

His heart raced as he pretended to study his hand closely like he was trying to memorize it. George's hands trembled from the rush, and he looks back up.

"What's it supposed to be?"

"A dog! See, if you move your pinky, you can make it talk or something," Clay explains, gently wiggling George's pinky, which sends another wave of heat to his face.

"Talk? I thought it was a dog?"

"You know what I meant."

George squints at the 'dog' until he can vaguely see the shape of a dog's head above, then he slowly makes the mouth move. His hand was cramping up, and he preferred his finger wiggling tactic over the actual art of hand puppets, but he was getting chuckles out of Clay as he struggled and that's all that mattered.

"Okay, okay, stop. You look like you're in pain when you do this," Clay laughs, gently pushing George's hands down.

"My hands were cramping up! Of course I looked like I was in pain," George exclaims as he shakes out his hands.

"This one's easier- it's just a llama," Clay says, and he retakes George's hands, subtly but not so subtly running his thumb across George's knuckles. *Oh my god. Oh my god. This isn't- no. Please, no.*

He knew this familiar warm feeling all too well, and he did not like feeling it since it was with Clay. His best friend. That knew nothing about...this sort of stuff. George has yet to say anything about his preference for boys, yet he almost felt like he didn't have to since Clay was doing a pretty good job on making him openly a flustered mess.

"A llama..." George repeats mindlessly. The two boys watch the ceiling as the head of a llama appears. George makes it turn its head to look around the room before making it hop up and down. "This one is much better than the dog."

Clay's hand appears in front of George's in the shadow, and the two llamas stared at each other.

"My llama is going to kick your llama's ass," Clay said. Sooner than George can respond, Clay brings his hand down on top of George's in a light punch.

"Hey! What the- Dream," George says, making sure to pour every ounce of fake betrayal in his voice. "How could you?"

"Bam!" Clay exclaims, punching his hand again. "Got another hit in."

"These are hand puppets, how are you making them competitive-" George is interrupted but another hit, this one bringing his llama hand down to hit his knee.

Okay. This means war.

George jabs his hand against Clay's, and it wasn't long before they were both exchanging quick hits against their hands, their llamas fighting for their lives as punch after punch rolled in and left a small bruise on George's knuckles. Eventually, as the rules got thrown out the window, and their llamas turned back into hands, they just started to punch each other in the arms blatantly. It wasn't hard hits since neither wanted to hurt the other person. But as George began to slap Clay's hands away before he could even touch him, Clay suddenly snatched George's hand.

"Ha! Gotcha!" Clay yells. George wasn't done fighting, though, and he tried to pry away from the hand wrapped securely around his hand.

"Dream, let go!"

"No! You're just gonna hit me again."

"I swear I'm not."

"Come on, that's bullshit."

"You hit me first!"

"What is this, kindergarten? 'Oh, he hit me first! I'm so innocent!' like seriously, George?" Clay said, and he mocks George's accent. George's eyes narrow.

"You're just mad that your hits became predictable."

"Sure."

"You are! Don't pretend-"

"-I'm not pretending, I literally agreed with you!" His friend wheezes out.

"You said sure, and that's just fake agreement," George points out. "Now give me my arm-"

There's a sudden tug at his arm, and he's pulled forward, George finding himself nose to nose with Clay who had a dangerous look in his eye.

"If I give you your hand back, are you going to hit me again?" Clay asks in a low voice. George's head felt light again, and he was pretty sure his hand was sweaty too.

He didn't dare to make it obvious. "Yeah, obviously."

"Then, no. You can't have your hand back."

"You can't just-"

"I can."

"No, you can't-"

"I can."

"Can you let me finish my sentence?"

"Nope."

George sighs, and he really wished he could pull his heart out of his chest and ask it why it raced every time Clay looked in his eyes. He felt sick. It wasn't like an *Oh god; I'm going to throw up sick*, it was more of the sick feeling you get during a long car ride when your head feels funny, and you feel almost nauseous.

George looks away at the fake plastic plants behind Clay. Anywhere but his eyes.

The wind howls outside, and there's a quick dump of rain as George's heart and mind argue. It was almost exactly what happened back in the empty terminal yesterday. Clay got close, and George had to pull away to keep himself from doing something he most certainly would regret. This time though, he didn't want to be the one to pull away. George wanted to see if Clay was just being Clay or if he was actually going to try something-

There's a hand on his neck. That alone snaps George right out of his mental monologue, and then he's back in reality, staring straight at his best friend. Clay inches a bit closer so George could feel his breath on his lips, and he freezes with wide eyes.

"George?" Clay whispers. George didn't say anything. He couldn't. It felt like someone shoved paper in his throat, and if he talked, he would get a million little paper cuts. His heart rivaled the rumbled of thunder outside. *What the fuck is Dream doing?!*

Clay tilts his head slightly but doesn't move any closer since George didn't respond, and George could see his friend trying to figure out what to do. George was barely responsive from nerves. Clay slowly lowers George's grasped hand down on top of Clay's knee, turning their hands so they lock together, and George finds his head tilting in the other direction out of instinct.

"Dream..." George barely mumbles. *Don't. Don't do it, please.*

Clay leans in, and as soon as George feels his friend's soft lips brush against his, he jumps up from the bench and takes a few steps backward from him. Jesus, even though it was a sad little lip brush, George still felt like he was struck by lightning and his stomach was doing flips. George finally lets go of the breath he's been holding as Clay stares up at him in horror.

"I'll...I'll be right back," George said, and he whips around, making a beeline for the nearest bathroom.

It was hard to find his way in the dark since he left the flashlight back on the bench, and when he finally managed to stumble into the bathroom, he went directly to the sink and turned the faucet on. He splashes cold water on his face and looks at his wet, exhausted face in the mirror. He felt like someone was placing cinderblocks on his chest, and his breathing was coming out in heaves, his eyes still holding that fear that Clay must've seen when he jumped away. With shaking hands, he turns off the water and turns around. He didn't want to look at himself. George's throat felt tight and he wanted to hit something. For real this time, not the playful punches he was giving Clay.

As George replayed what happened, his panic dissolves into bitter anger at himself. God, he was stupid. Of course Clay wouldn't pull away, and George knew this. Deep, deep, deep down, he did. George wasn't a blind idiot, and he knew better than to let himself fall again. Yet, George let Clay

hold him in his arms when danced and slept, he let Clay get close to him, which was his biggest mistake. The last time he let someone get as close as Clay did, he was left with no one at the end of the day. George had no one to go to except Clay, and he would be damned if he let himself ruin their friendship because of his stupid feelings.

George slammed a frustrated fist down on the fake marble counter and then proceeded to shake out his already bruised hand. He didn't know why he was hiding in the bathroom like a middle schooler- he already made a clear choice on what to do. So, George takes a steady breath in and calms his still racing heart before making slow steps back to Clay.

As he rounds the corner, he sees Clay still sitting on the bench, but then he jumps up when he notices that George came back.

"George-"

"It's fine."

Clay blinks. "What?"

"It's fine, don't worry about it," George says with a shrug. "Not a big deal."

"Not a big- what?" Clay says and his eyebrows knit together. "Are you sure?"

No, because I do want you to kiss me. "Yeah. It's not like we actually...you know."

"Kissed?"

"Yeah, that."

There's a slight pause. "Can I at least still apologize?"

"For what? Nothing happened."

"George, come on. I know it's weird, and I'm sorry, but you can't just pretend it never-"

"I can, and I am."

"George," Clay sighs, and he takes a step to him.

"Clay- drop it. It's good! We're fine! We didn't kiss, and we were just messing around, it's fine."

At the mention of his real name, Clay's mouth snaps shut, but he continued to watch George with a weird expression. As much as he hated it, Clay was his best friend, and he knew when George was lying through gritted teeth. But he didn't push. Even when George quickly swooped in and picked up his phone, Clay didn't comment. However, George started leading them back to their camp, and that's when Clay decided to say something.

"Okay- what's your issue?"

"What do you mean?" George asks, not even turning around.

"This! You're acting like an angry parent, and you're walking, like, five feet away from me."

"I don't...know. Okay? I don't know."

"You never know."

George turns around and stares at Clay. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means that you never know. I dunno how else to explain it." The boys come to a stop in front of the fountain where Clay almost face-planted days ago.

"What don't I know? I know that you were about to make a stupid choice, and now I'm helping you out by pretending we didn't just almost kiss for no reason."

"Stupid choice?! *No reason?!'*" Clay's voice was rising with each word. "George- you have no idea how dumb you sound right now."

George squares his shoulders. "Enlighten me then, Dream."

"I- no. No, I won't," Clay falters. George wasn't going to let him go that easily.

"No, explain to me why I sound dumb. What's *your* issue, Dream? Do you like me or something? Why is this such a big deal to you?" George's jaw clenches at the boldness of his questions, but he needed to make a point here.

"Yes!" Clay shouts, and George's face falls. "It's a big deal because... ah! Goddamit!"

Before he could get another word in, Clay blurts out something that made George's heart stop.

"We've already kissed George. Last year."

George was laughing.

And it wasn't a small laugh that people force when they don't know what to say, it was a full-on gasping for air laugh. Clay watches in slight shock as George doubles over with silent laughter, shoulders bouncing, and he honestly thought his friend had lost it. George finally caught airport madness.

"Oh my-" George couldn't even finish his sentence because a new round of laughter exploded from him.

Clay was taken back a bit. Of course he was- telling your best friend that you kissed each other and that he's been lied to for almost a year *shouldn't* cause a laughing fit. However, as George continued to laugh to himself silently, Clay found his own disbelief giggles bubble up.

"Wh-what? What are you laughing at?" Clay asks, and George pretends to wipe a tear from his eye.

"Because we totally kissed before!" George said, fighting through more laughter. *Does he...know? Has this motherfucker known the whole time?!*

"Uh, yeah! We have!" Clay says. George laughed harder and grabbed Clay's arm to keep him steady as he doubles over, small, breathy squeaks coming out. Clay, completely confused but still catching onto George's giggles, snorts and laughs with him. "Wow, you don't remember that, George? It was, like, your first kiss ever!"

"Stop! Stop, I'm going to pee-Dream!" His friend gasps. Clay wheezes, throw his head back to the dark ceiling above them, and he was wondering why the fuck George was taking this so well. He was scared of nothing.

"Y-yeah! Nono, look-" Dream says, laughing, and he makes George stand up straight to look at him again. Clay squishes his friend's giggling face together. "Like...we were like this 'n' then you were like 'Oh Dreamie! Let me kiss you!'"

"Mm! 'm wassnot," George said, pulling away from Clay. "You were like- 'George! Kiss me! What about me, George? Don't you love me?' and...ha! Oh my god-"

George burst out laughing again, but something wasn't sitting right with Clay when he heard George say that. Something was wrong here.

"What?!" Clay wheezes gently. "No way! You stole my hoodie, and you were-"

"I can't- Dream, I can't breathe! That is the worst joke you've ever told," George finishes, grinning up at him with watery eyes. *Joke...joke? Joke. He said joke.*

"Joke?" Clay repeats dumbly.

"Oh yeah, we've totally kissed before! Full-on made out, totally," his friend said. "I think I would remember if we kissed or not."

"I-George!" Clay practically yells in awe. Was his friend really this fucking stupid, or was he avoiding acknowledging what Clay just admitted to? "George, actually- we-"

His throat closes up, and his laughter starts again. It hurt to laugh, and it felt so forced in his chest despite his shoulders bouncing with every chuckle, but he was aghast. His brain couldn't process what was happening fast enough, and before he knew it, his mouth was moving.

"We were at that d-dumb New Year's party and...and haha! Okay, sorry, but we were in that ugly living room because I remember when you first walked into the house, you said it was the mustard room! Because it was all yellow! And I remember you getting hooked on that stupid cherry apple drink your friend made, and you were so *dumb*, and we kis-we kissed, George! In that stupid mustard room."

Clay had to dig his teeth into his bottom lip to keep from laughing, and he could taste blood as he swallowed more giggles. It wasn't funny. He felt like he was going to pass out because a *joke*? Seriously? Clay loved to mess with his friend, but there were boundaries.

"Why are you laughing?" George asks. All the amusement left his voice, and all that was left was confusion. *That makes two of us, dumbass.*

"Because you thought it was a joke! Why would I joke about-"

"It's not a joke?"

"No! George! It's not," Clay scoffs, throwing his hands out.

George's face falls. "Wh-"

"Why would I *joke* about something like that?"

"You...We almost did back there. I thought you were trying to lighten the mood," George said in a quiet voice. Even though the secret's weight was off of his chest, Clay still felt the crushing guilt on every cell in his body. George truly didn't know, and Clay actually did have a reason to be worried here. Scared, even, since George looked like he was stabbed.

"No." That's all he could say. He watches George study the air above his head with his eyebrows scrunching.

"I don't remember-"

"You were shit-faced."

"Thanks, Dream. Way to soften the blow," George said. His friend takes a seat on the edge of the fountain, still trying to piece together the information to a story that somewhat made sense. Clay sits down on the floor with his back pressing into the rigid stone wall, knees drawn up, and the two stare down the airport's dark hallway. The wind made the skylights above rattle, but the rain had paused and left a terrifying quiet between the two boys.

"You want me to explain?" Clay offers. George traces a crack in the fountain, and he takes his silence as a yes. With a deep breath, Clay starts talking.

He doesn't go into detail when he gets to the kissing part. In fact, his words seem to stop dead in his mouth as he remembers the dizzy warmth of adrenaline when they kissed. As he skips over it with an almost silent 'Anyways,' he finds himself talking about after the party even though it was pretty much irrelevant. It was just too quiet, and Clay didn't expect anything more from his stoic friend, who seemed to stop listening as he kept rambling.

"You okay?" Clay asks when he finishes. George tears his eyes from the hallway and looks down

at him with a slight shrug.

"I mean, yeah. It doesn't mean anything. It was just us being drunk idiots, and it's not a big deal," George said. Clay swears he hears his heart rip a little and his bones ached with defeat because he could've *sworn* George shared some mutual feeling. Was he just reading him wrong?

He realizes George was waiting for him to agree. "Yea-yes. Dumb. Stupid. We're all good."

"Good."

"...sorry for not telling you," Clay said. George nods and continues to pick at the stone's crack, making Clay fight a cringe at the scraping noise, though that was the least of his problems.

"No big deal."

"You're not mad or anything?"

"Eh," George shrugs again. He picks up a small pebble and flicks it into the dark. "A little bit."

"Oh."

George stands up, and the shadows shift as he moves his phone's flashlight, pointing it back to where they came from. Clay doesn't have the heart to move, and he stays sitting against the wall, zoned out on the tile floors. He felt so stupid for blurting it out- there could've been a million and one other things to respond with, and he chose the one that definitely weirded George out. Oh, and the one that possibly cost them their friendship.

"I'm going back to our things," George said, and he walked away. He didn't bother to ask Clay if he was coming or wait up for him, and all Clay could do was listen as his footsteps, and the light faded down the airport. *He's stupid.*

Thunder crashes above him and makes him jump, slamming his shoulder blade into the stone, and he hisses in pain.

"What the fuck?!" Clay yells to himself, slamming a fist onto the floor in a flash of anger. His numb disappointment flared into a burst of rage at the storm. The stupid fucking storm that kept them close and in this airport. The stupid. Fucking. Storm. "What the fuck, what the fuck, what the fuck?!"

With every curse, he continues to slam his fist to the floor, and he ignores the dull ache in his shoulder and his numb hand. He didn't even notice that he was crying until the rain started. That's when he felt the boiling tears on his cheeks, and with shaking hands, he wipes them away and makes sure his cheeks hurt from the aggressive swipes. This absolutely sucked.

"Stop fucking thundering!" He shouts as another dull rumble echos through the building. He was losing it. He felt like he was at least. Clay's been in this stupid storm for far too long, and he wanted it to be over and done with. If George just listened to him and got on that plane, he wouldn't have ratted himself out! They would've been okay. His breathing was ragged, and his whole body hurt, and he was so, so, so embarrassed. He couldn't even begin to imagine how bad George must've felt. He should've played it off as a joke like George said.

No, wait. He wasn't actually- he was going to be an adult and own up to this.

I got us into this mess, and I'll get us out, Clay thought, and he leaned back to stare up at the skylights, head resting against the cool fountain. *I just gotta think...maybe it'll be okay? George*

likes his space, and I can try again tomorrow-er, today. Today? Ugh, I don't even know what time it is.

Clay rubs his face, and for the first time in his life, he was fresh out of ideas. He had no idea what he was going to do to make sure he and George were good. He had no idea what was going to happen. He had absolutely no idea. But then again, they had no idea a hurricane was going to rip apart their plans, and it turned out fine (up until this point, at least). They would figure it out, and George would come around eventually, right? He made himself clear with how he felt about the kiss, and Clay respected their friendship over his dumb feelings. But he would be damned if he wasn't going to try to get through to George again.

George lied, though. Clay wasn't the only one keeping things in this airport.

It was a justified lie in his defense. Having your best friend announce that there was already something between them was kind of shell-shocking, and George felt like he was dunked into frigid waters when he realized Clay was, in fact, not joking. George had no clue what to say to him. Hearing that bit of information literal minutes after they almost kissed seemed too good to be true, hence why George really thought his friend was just messing around with him. It's been a weird night for him. Anyways, the kiss not being a big deal and not mattering was a huge lie. It was a pretty big fucking deal.

When George was on his lonely walk back to their terminal, taking the long way so he could work out his thoughts with his heart skipping in his chest, and he hated the mixture of giddiness and fear in his stomach. It felt like he was being dropped from the tallest building in the world, knowing he was going to splat onto concrete. Did he show it? He hoped not. Seeing Clay admit it made George feel awful. *Am I really that bad to talk to? Does he really feel like he can't tell me things?*

George's fingers fiddle with the white tarp, and he pushes it back, taking a step into the much louder room where the wind went from a gentle whistle to a train right outside the window. He had no idea how the fuck he got here, but he walked by the plywood where they danced, and where Clay held him when he scared George, and he sat right on the floor next to the window. He could make out small raindrops on the window with his phone light, his ghostly reflection staring back at him.

God, he looked like a mess. Inside and out.

George presses his forehead against the glass and screws his eyes shut. He wanted to remember. And he almost could. Small little flashes of Clay smiling down at him and phantom fingers on his neck made his heart race as he stares out, kicking himself for leaving his friend at that fountain. He couldn't make himself turn around, even though he wanted to.

"Dumbass," George mumbles into the darkness. "Why didn't you just tell me?"

He wasn't surprised, he did know why Clay didn't tell him, but it still stung like hell and he wanted to crawl in himself and cringe until he died. For multiple reasons, really. One, he was embarrassed for letting Clay see him like that and two, if he just told George, it would've saved him a lot of wondering. The ball was in George's court with what he wanted to do and he knew Clay was going to be looking for more answers. Answers that George knew, but didn't want to say. Seeing Clay absolutely lose it and choke out the words while laughing was one of the scariest things he witnessed his friend do, and he's done a lot of things. He knew Clay was probably upset with him walking off, but George couldn't tell him now. Not when their friendship was chipping.

George promised himself, and whatever divine entity is causing this awful storm, that before he left for England, he would tell Clay how it was going to be. He was going to break off whatever

feelings his friend felt because George didn't want to start something he shouldn't and end up crushing himself.

He couldn't let himself fall again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Oh, what could go wrong? Just go right ahead, Clay, and tell him! I'm sure he'll handle it just fine —way to lay it on him, idiot.

Clay brushes the white tarp back and looks across the barren room to his friend, huddled against the window, staring out at the downpour. It was ironic. It seemed like as soon as Clay explained to George what happened, the sky ripped open and was dumping a new ocean down on them. The storm had picked up a bit, causing a ripple of panic through the airport, but Clay barely cared. He didn't call his sister. He didn't check the weather. He didn't listen to other stranger's conversations. Clay didn't care.

It was a rough night, and Clay felt like his blinking replaced his sleep, but he was still up at the crack ass of dawn, and he was the first person in line at the store with his \$20 bill clutched in his hand. George, understandably, didn't take the news too well. After Clay's burst of exhausted anger, he buried his face in his hands for what felt like ages before making a new promise to himself: Clay was going to make it up to George. He was going to swallow whatever feelings he had, and he was going to fix this. He didn't know how but he was.

That's what he was doing. Working up his pride, he starts to walk to George with a plastic bag filled with the things he bought for him. Clay knew it was kind of shallow to buy him things in place of an apology; however, it was hard to apologize to someone who wasn't really talking.

"Hey," Clay says as he stands in front of George. His friend doesn't make any sign of acknowledging his presence. "I- um, I got you some things?"

George's eyes glance over at the bag but waste no time going back outside. Clay had no idea what the fuck to do. Should he leave the bag next to him and try again in a few hours? Should he get on his knees and beg for George to talk to him? Should he start handing him the things and force George to look at him- wait. *That...that's not a bad idea.*

Clay takes a seat on the floor next to him and he ignores how George's eyes close for a second in annoyance. His friend looked as rough as Clay did, but there was something off. George's hair was ruffled up like he's been running his hands through it, and George's eyes looked dull and puffy, but not in the way like he just finished crying. George never cried. It was like George kept rubbing his eyes, and he usually did that when he was thinking about things. Not that Clay was surprised- he would have some things to think about if his best friend told him they kissed a whole ass year ago.

Digging into the bag, Clay pulls out the water bottle and holds it out to George. After a minute of awkwardly holding it and when Clay's bruised shoulder started to hurt, that's when he pressed it against George's arm.

"Stop, Clay," George snaps, jumping a bit from the cold. His friend briefly looks down at the water before turning away again to the rain.

"Come on now," Clay says. He nudges George with the bottle again, and he wipes the condensation off of his arm without looking. Clay's heart deflates a bit more, but he refused to give up. He places the water bottle next to George and moves on.

"I got you some chocolate raisins," he said as he pulled the bag out. "It's your favorite snack- you can't say no to this."

Thunder cracks up above and the rain comes down harder. *Okay...maybe mother nature can say no for you*, Clay thought. George makes no effort to take them and Clay leans them against the water with a small sigh.

"Okay, what about a shirt?" He pulls out a blue shirt that had 'I ♥ FLORIDA' printed on the chest. It was tacky, but he thought it was kind of funny since George probably wanted to be anywhere but in Florida right now. "I felt bad that you still don't have your suitcase, and I'm running out of shirts to give you, so..."

"Oh, so that you feel bad about?" George says. Clay flinches. George does grace him with a quick look at the shirt, and Clay still considered that a small step of progress.

"There's also a few Kit Kats in there, but I don't think you want me to pull them out."

"No," George says.

"Can we just talk?"

"We did talk last night," George says, and Clay, honest to God, feels a shudder down his spine when George makes eye contact with him. "I have nothing to say to you."

Clay swallows. "I know. And I wouldn't really call it talking. It was more like me telling you what happened, and you were just sitting there-"

"That's not helping," George said. Clay closes his mouth and the two boys look back outside.

"When do you think the rain will stop?" Clay asks out of spite. He really wanted George to talk to him.

George shrugs, drawing his knees to his chest, and he presses his temple on the glass. They both knew it was the last stretch, but they were not going to be leaving anytime soon. Neither wanted to say it out loud. Especially now since Clay really screwed them over.

"Are you ever going to stop being mad at me?"

"I don't know."

Clay pauses for a minute, trying to find his words. "I...I should've just said it was a joke, right?"

George snorts and shakes his head. Now, Clay understood why George was mad. He didn't understand why George was *this mad*- shouldn't they be almost celebrating that they both have mutual feelings? He couldn't get an answer, though, because *someone* didn't want to be an adult about it.

"Can you at least give me a hint on which part you're so mad about?" Clay asks. He knew he fucked up his words because of the way George's head whips to him, eyebrows knitted together.

"You honestly don't know why I'm upset?"

Clay raises his hands in defense. "No, no. Wait, I do-"

"I'm upset because my own friend- my best friend- felt like he couldn't tell me. I'm upset because if you told me, things would've- " George's voice clips, and the sentence dies, his eyes screwing shut.

"You knew, and you didn't tell me," he finishes in a low voice.

"I know I messed up, and I'm sorry, but-"

"I'm also upset that even though you knew about my sexuality when I thought you didn't, and you still went on and did all these things that made me feel like I was insane," George says.

Clay barely found the words. "I did?"

"You're an idiot. You know that?"

"Wait- I'm confused. Last night you said that it didn't matter and it wasn't a big deal. Why are you acting all mad now?"

"Are you surprised?" George asks, and Clay focuses on the corner of the window.

"No. Just... confused."

Out of the corner of his eye, he sees George's shoulders sag a bit, but he doesn't explain anything. Typical George, though, never explained how he felt and never likes to handle things like this. Something wasn't sitting right with Clay. The more they sat in silence, staring at the outside, and the more Clay thought about George's weird 180 on the situation made him feel like something was wrong. Well, besides the fact that Clay told him about the kiss, something else wasn't right either.

Did Clay ask about it, though? No, of course not. He's done enough for them, and if George wasn't going to leave this place, then he was. Clay stands and drops the plastic bag down next to the water before shoving his hands in his pockets, taking slow steps out. Maybe if he walked slow enough, George would call him back and make an effort to say something? That was another solid no.

Whatever. Clay had a wedding he needed to go to and a storm to track, George knew where he would be, and when he was ready, he would go to Clay.

This was a mess- Clay didn't know what to think anymore, but he'll fix it. He knows George better than George knows himself, and he knows that if he can't have George, then he'll have to prove to him that he's still his friend. His best friend. Even if it felt like poison swallowing his feelings, he would do anything for George.

Clay's fingers swiped mindlessly through his camera roll, drawing blanks on how to help, but being too bored out of his mind to care. George and he didn't have many pictures together since seeing each other in person was a rare occasion- (Clay now understanding why George never wanted to spend more than a week with him.) Granted, Clay's fast scrolling sent him all the way to the top of his camera roll *after* he saw something that caught his eye. Clay scrolls back down, way slower this time, and his green eyes scan the rows for that photo.

I really need to delete some of these, Clay notes as he blows past a whole portfolio of failed Patches pictures. Ones that were too blurry to use but too funny to delete. However, they were not the photo he was looking for.

Then there it was.

As soon as Clay rolls his eyes at one of George's stupid selfies he used to send, the picture was sitting pretty right next to his friend's face. Clay didn't know what the fuck it was at first. He spent a minute or two blowing up the image and rotating his phone to decode what he was looking at. It looked like a photo of a photo- a shiny, printed out polaroid sat against a wooden background and

Clay could vaguely see two figures standing in the center of the tiny thing.

"What?" Clay had no memory of this. He's pretty sure he didn't even take the picture that was on his phone. His phone screen burns his dry eyes as he brightens it and shoves it into his face. But holy fuck, he was definitely in that polaroid.

His little self was pretending to lean against a...a tower? *Maybe? Did George take- no, George is next to me. That has to be him, he's not even doing the pose right.*

George had a dark rain jacket on, which made sense since the sky was a deep gray behind them, and he was looking at Clay with a goofy grin on his face. His friend was mirroring Clay's pose but was several feet off from being aligned with the tower, making it seem like he was the world's worst mime. Little Clay was looking to George too, face in a wide grin.

What is this shit...Ugh, George would know but he's not here is he, Clay? Dumbass, he represses a groan and continues to study the picture. They both looked so happy with each other.

Clay loses track of time. Minutes pass and then hours as he sits, trying to match a memory to a photo and he doesn't even realize that the man of the hour was standing right in front of him.

"Dream?" George asks, bending down slightly to meet his eyes.

Clay practically shoots up in his seat. "Yeah? What's up?"

"I came for my stuff," George said and Clay pretends that the words don't drive the knife in his heart deeper. He sinks back in his chair.

"Oh."

Silence. Then- "Yeah...it's under your chair. Can you grab it?"

"Yeah, sorry," He scrambles for the torn-up bag and hands it to George, who was looking everywhere but at him.

"Thanks," George says. He turns to start walking away and Clay actually stands up this time, grabbing George's forearm and spinning him around to look at him.

"George-" Clay says just as George sighs out a:

"Dream-"

They both pause and wait for the other to continue. Neither of them wanted to go first, however, and it left a long stretch of painful awkwardness between them.

"I was..." Clay starts, seeing if George was going to say something first. "I was just seeing if you knew where this came from?"

Clay hands George his phone and George's eyes narrow a bit.

"It's really...blurry. And tin-"

"-and tiny. I know."

George studies for another second. "Yeah, I have no idea. It's somewhere in England, though. That's Big Ben. I just don't know when."

Before Clay could respond, George gives the phone back and walks off again. Since the storm was beginning to thin out, more people were slowly returning to the airport which meant it was getting easier to lose his short ass friend in the crowd.

"Wait!"

He didn't even realize he called out to him until he saw George's steps falter a second. George stops but doesn't turn around.

"Where are-Where are you going? Back to that room?"

"I'm going to see if there's any flights for England open. You know, after the storm."

Clay blinks. "You're-" *Leaving. He's trying to leave.* "What?"

"I have to go home eventually, Dream," George says quietly, dropping his eyes to the floor. Clay doesn't know what to say- he hasn't even started trying to help George feel better and he was already slipping like sand through Clay's fingers.

"It's still raining and the wind barely died down," Clay tries to reason. George simply shrugs his shoulders, fiddling with his backpack strap. *Shutting down again, George, what are you so afraid of?*

"I'll be back," George said. It was an empty promise but Clay was almost glad to see George disappear into the airport. Clay's heart was racing with nerves and pressure, swallowing the rock that was shoved down his throat. If his friend stuck around any longer, he was confident that he would die, but George leaving meant Clay could think straight again. And he had to think straight to come up with something. George needed to see that Clay was still his best friend and that he could trust him again. George needed to stick with him.

But how?

Clay fucked up last night, simple as that. As he flopped back down in those flat airport seats, staring at the mysterious picture, he had an idea. It was a desperate and crazy one but it could work. It had to work. Clay pulled out his old plane ticket and a pen that was buried in the bottom of his bag, with his phone filled with memories of him and his best friend balanced perfectly on his armrest...

...and he started writing.

Chapter End Notes

and so it begins :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The longer George ignored Clay, the more his friend seemed to annoy him.

"Can you stop looking at me?" George snaps. He could feel Clay's hard stare from across the aisle where George sat to be petty. Clay doesn't even try to act like he wasn't staring. In fact, Clay doesn't look away and he raises an equally annoyed eyebrow at him.

"I will once you talk to me."

George rolls his eyes and goes back to refreshing the open flight list. "I just did, and I currently am."

"Come on, you know what I mean," Clay said. It's been a full day since George hid in the under-construction terminal, and it's been a full day since George tried to get lost in the airport. The keyword is tried here since he got bored after an hour or two of wandering and came back to Clay. Even when he's pissed, he can't seem to shake his friend off of him. Now that Clay's frustrated emotions caught up to George's, the airport was filled with tension and George was officially out of ideas on how to avoid the topic.

"It's whatever. What's done is done, and we have better things to focus on," George said as Clay leaned forward, elbows on his knees. "Seriously. Just drop it."

Clay didn't. "George. We've been stuck here for almost a week. You've been mad at me for like two days now. If you wanted to drop it so badly, you would make an effort to talk and hear me out here."

"No," George responds, and he lifts his head to stare at his tired friend. As much as George hated to admit it, his friend had a point there. George didn't really care, in all honesty. He was busy trying to get himself back home and trying to ward off his already present, and growing, feelings for his friend.

George goes back to his phone when he hears Clay let go of a drawn-out sigh, finally breaking the staring, and slouches down in his airport chair. George feels bad for a few seconds until he remembers that Clay kept something pretty big from him, and he starts to feel slightly less bad. Clay had no idea how much stress he could've saved George if he told him long ago- he wouldn't have to keep playing this game with him. The game of whether or not Clay was screwing him over and lying about *his* feelings to make George feel better, or if Clay did genuinely like him and he was just an idiot about telling him.

"I'm gonna walk," Clay mumbles, not wasting any time disappearing into the airport and leaving George to watch over their stuff.

"Where are you going?" George calls to him. He sees Clay's shoulders shrug up, and then he loses him when a family walks between them. George scoffs and he goes back to his phone, but quickly shuts it off. He lost all hope for finding open flights today. At this point, they were guaranteed a few more days while they waited for flooding to go down and for the runway to be cleaned up.

George rests his chin in his hands and closes his eyes, exhaustion seeping into his bones. It was quiet without Clay. Not like it was a good thing- George missed the beginning days where they

would joke around and sneak off in the airport. As much as he wanted that back, Clay would have to pull off one hell of an apology. Even though George understood why Clay hid it from him, maybe his friend was right, though- should he make an effort to hear him out?

No...The more he talks, the weirder I feel. Hard pass, George decides. He already struggled for years with making sure their friendship was his priority, and now Clay comes along and completely shatters his perception of how he acted. It was gut-wrenching to hear that he slipped up as soon as alcohol entered his system, so George was madder at himself than Clay at this point. *Still want that apology, though.*

"George!"

Before he could open up his eyes, Clay throws himself in the chair next to George and grabs his arm. George, honest to God, jumped five feet into the air.

"Fu- what?! What happened?!" George cries as he calmed himself down. Clay was grinning ear to ear, and he shoots back up, wasting no time trying to tug George from his seat.

"C'mon! You're gonna like this-"

George yanks his arm back. "What is it?"

"Just- come on!" Clay said. George was a bit suspicious considering the fact Clay wasn't gone for even five minutes, and he already found something interesting. But was George going to take the risk of missing out on a crumb of entertainment? Nope.

Clay yanks his arm again, George allowing himself to be pulled through the airport again (serious déjà vu), but he wasn't done asking questions yet.

"What about our stuff?"

"It's fine. It'll be like five minutes and-"

"-How far is it?"

"It's right here!"

They slow down and come to a point where a bunch of terminals met, circling a small area with a fake palm tree in the center with benches all around it. Small, abandoned shopping stands circle the outside, and then George saw where Clay was dragging him. There, nestled in the middle of one of the terminal entrances, was a photo booth.

"A photo booth?" George says. Clay was still grinning as he leaned against the black box.

"Yep."

George's face scrunched in confusion as he circles around it. He used to be addicted to these a few years ago when he traveled to America, and he went home with books worth of cheap strips of photos. One of the strips captured Clay accidentally tripping into the booth when he was first figuring out how it worked, and he has that taped up on his computer screen back in London.

"Okay, but why?" George asks.

"*Because-*" Clay stresses, and he pulls back the curtain. "I know you like to get pictures, and we haven't gotten any since we had to be smart with our phone batteries. So, I figured why not? You

get your pictures and..."

"And?"

"...And there's nothing else to do," Clay finishes. George looked at the booth with his arms crossed. "Are you gonna-"

"I'm thinking about it, shut up," George said, and Clay rolls his eyes, letting the curtain fall. *Okay, I'm still mad at Dream...but he remembered that I liked these... He's making this confusing again- wasn't he just glaring at me?* George thought, and he scans the outside of the booth. Clay groans and goes back to leaning against it, hitting his head on the wall. *Does it really matter? It's pictures, and I said I wanted things to go back to normal-*

"Can you think faster?" Clay said. George shoots him a look and pulls back the curtain to duck his head inside. *-As I was saying, Dream did have a point. Maybe if I just go along with it, it'll be less tense? Worth a shot.*

George starts to step in, but he's shoved instead- tripping over the ledge and catching himself with the opposite wall as Clay calmly sits on the bench.

"Was that necessary?" George snaps. Clay was tapping on the neon screen, not even acknowledging what he did.

"Hm?"

"You pushed me."

"No? You tripped."

"Why would I trip? That's something you do, and I have photographic evidence of you-"

"*'Oh- I have photo-graphic evi-donce of yew-*," Clay mocks, and he feeds the machine the last of their money. "You tripped because you're an idiot. Now sit down; we have five seconds to pose."

"What-"

"George! Just- okay," Clay says, and George sees the counter tick down to two. George was still standing, hunched over in the booth, and far from being ready. George scrambles to find the bench in the dark, but before he can, Clay yanks down his arm. It sends George flying face-first into the camera.

"Lookin' Good!" The machine sings to them as it shows the photo. Clay bursts out laughing with a painful wheeze, slapping his hand over his eyes. George groans and rubs his forehead where he hit the camera, a dull pain spreading around his head. Not off to a good start.

"Geor-George, look!" Clay wheezes, slapping George's arm. George blinks at the bright light from the purple screen and the horrible photo displayed in front of them.

"Aw, what?" George said. He was smiling, though. The picture showed the split second before George slammed into the camera, his facial features streaked with a blur, but you could clearly still see the look of pure horror on his face. Clay was in the background with his mouth in a perfect 'O' shape, hand getting ready to try to catch George.

"Can we keep that?" Clay says. George studies the picture for a few more seconds with his smile growing.

"Duh." Without any hesitation, Clay slams his hand down on the green button at the center, and the picture disappears. The timer starts to click down.

"Let me sit first, Dream!" George exclaims and he finally sees himself in the camera. "What are we-"

"Serious."

George blinks at the camera as it snaps the photo, sending a blinding flash in their faces. George rubs his eyes as it pulls up the picture.

"Can you wait a minute so I can get ready or something?" George asks.

"No."

George gives him a deadpan stare. Clay pretends not to notice, too busy choking back his giggles as he looks at the new picture.

"Why do you look so scared?" Clay questions, pointing to George's face. Sure enough, his face looked like he had seen a ghost just seconds before, while Clay just looked bored. They both looked terrible though- clothes wrinkled and hair ruffled from days without showering. They had deep eyebags, and there were traces of sadness in both of their eyes. George cringed a bit, and he looks at his friend's eyes in the photo. Clay chuckled slightly when George didn't say anything, the energy slowly disappearing. And George did was George does best- he panicked.

"You look good! In the...photo...thing. Good face?" George says, but it ends as a question. Clay snorts and ducks his head away.

"Gee, thanks. Are you ready for the next one now?" Clay hovers his hand over the button again.

"What are we going to do?"

"No idea. Any suggestions?" Clay said. George sat for a minute and studied the dirty floor.

"Let's do a funny one."

"Did you forget about the first picture?" Clay asks. George swats at his arm.

"It wasn't funny- I have a headache now," George said, rubbing his forehead again. "And I mean like purposefully funny."

"But those aren't funny then. You gotta be funny on *accident*."

"Well, Einstein, you have another idea?" George snaps and Clay laughs.

"Psh, no," his friend scoffs.

"Exactly. Take the damn photo."

Clay was still laughing when he presses the button and the two shift into their poses. George opens his mouth into a circle and pushes his cheeks together while Dream crosses his eyes, puckering his lips forward. There's the flash and the two relax right after, giggling at their faces.

"What the hell were you doing, George?"

"You look like a fish, Dream!"

"I would like to point out how far you made your mouth go out-"

The mocks and taunts were coming left and right, fingers darting around the screen to point out everything in each other's faces. They spent a good five minutes bullying each other before moving on, taking a few more pictures, and insulting each other a bit more, each photo seemingly funnier than the last. , The robotic voice announces the last photo and just as George is starting to make the most horrendous face he could, Clay taps his knee.

"Wait wait wait," he said quickly. "Let's do a normal one."

"What do you mean?"

"Like... we just smile at the camera," Clay said. George glares at him.

"No, that's weird. Let's pretending that we're stuck...like, in the screen? I could-"

"No, seriously! Let's do a normal one, so we have something less embarrassing to show people when we get outta here," Clay urges. George slumps his shoulders and rolls his eyes at his friend.

"That's not fun, though."

"Who paid for the pictures?"

"...You."

"Right. So, we at least have to do this one," Clay said, hand resting lightly on the button.

"Wh- really? You wanted to do this!"

"Yeah, to cheer you up!"

George groaned. "Well, it didn't! I was shoved in and then slammed into the camera on the first picture."

"Yeah, but guess what?"

"What?"

"You're smiling."

Then there's a flash and George froze. Sure enough, he could feel himself grinning and his heart was pounding in his chest as Clay gives him a cocky smile, nodding his head to the picture.

"I'm in love!" The machine sings for the final picture, and George whips his head to the screen, a hot blush on his face as his heart beats faster. He lifts his stunned gaze to the picture and there they were.

George didn't realize how close they were actually sitting. George's torso was turned fully to Clay, their knees pressing against each other, and George had a bright smile on his face. Clay's eyes were scrunched up in a victorious grin. George looked...different in the picture and he didn't like it. His eyes were lit up in amusement and Clay looked so fond, and it's weird. George didn't like how he looked because that's exactly what he was trying to ignore.

"I don't like it," George says quickly and he goes to tap the red X on the screen, but Clay grabs his wrist.

"Are you kidding?! No way, this is the best one- we're keeping it."

"I look weird!"

"George, you had your face in the camera and we just made ugly faces for half of them. Now you're worried about looking weird?" Clay said. He then raised an eyebrow and nudged George with his shoulder, making him sway slightly. "You look fine. Don't worry," he promised in a soft voice.

Then George felt it. That feeling he's been dreading for years now. That sickly warm, syrupy feeling that made his insides melt, stomach roll, and his heart skip. George felt sweaty and he didn't dare to look at Clay- hell, he couldn't because if he did, he would be a goner. He just needed to stick it out for a few more days, and then he can try to shove this all behind him.

Clay's fingers slowly slip from George's wrist and George lowers his finger, still staring at the stranger in the picture. Is that what Clay saw that night? The night they kissed? George couldn't take his eyes off of Clay's bright face, repeating the story to himself in his head, and something clicks. *Was I always...Did I- no. No, no, no. I couldn't have been; I was doing so well! I thought I was shaking it off. This has to something else! No way I'm actually- I'm supposed to be mad at him!*

There's a loud hiss and two strips of photos shoot out from the tiny slot under the button. Clay grabs them and wastes no time getting out, sliding his finger down the row. George blinks and clenches his jaw, having no idea what to feel.

"Here-" Clay says, handing George one, and he's snapped back into reality. George goes to take it, trying not to jump when their fingers brush, but Clay snatches it back. "Wait, hang on..."

Clay pats his hoodie pocket and George hears paper crinkle, surprised to see Clay pull out his pen. His friend turns his back to George and scribbles something down on the picture, throwing his head back to peer at George in a comedic way- but George was busy staring down the palm tree. *If I don't look at him, I won't feel anything.*

"Okay, here!"

George takes the pictures and Clay flips his hand over to show the white backside of them. Scribbled at the top, George read:

Stick with me :)

George narrows his eyes a bit, having not a clue on what he meant. Clay was watching him though, and he needed to say something because if he just walked away, that would be weird. God knows they didn't need any more weirdness between them.

"You write like a four-year-old," George states. Clay barks out a surprised laugh, but George didn't miss the relief that relaxed his shoulders. They look at the pictures as they walk back and George traces Clay's handwriting with his fingertips, letting himself soak in that feeling he's been scared of. He let his eyes wander over picture Clay's face and, despite being colorblind, he felt like he was looking through rose-colored glasses.

As they returned to their (thankfully) untouched stuff, Clay smiled at George. It wasn't the goofy smile he had in the photo booth and it wasn't the awkward smile he gave George when he first came to get his stuff yesterday. It was almost apologetic, like he really wanted to be sorry but no longer had the words to express it. Instead, George's official apology from Clay was when his friend lifted his fist, and held it out to him, before muttering:

"We good?"

George looked down at it for a moment before smiling back at him, tapping his own fist against it. "We're good."

Clay did care about him. Even though George wasn't mad as long as he wanted to be and this was far from the apology he expected, he knew this was his weird Clay-way of apologizing. He *did* take George to the photo booth and he never stopped trying to make him smile since the night he slipped up. *What is it that they say? Actions speak louder than words?*

Clay cracks a joke and George rolls his eyes, despite his weak knees. He still had no idea if he wanted to know the answer to that and he felt like he didn't want to risk anything since their friendship practically bit the dust yesterday. But then as they took seats next to each other, their heads bent together as they checked the weather, something sparked in George's heart. It was different from that syrup feeling he had and it made him relax against Clay's arm a bit. He felt happy again. Careless almost.

George's eyes zone out on Clay's face as his friend mindlessly rants about the storm, becoming mesmerized with every little thing he did. George would then make a mindless jab about how he's always going to check the weather before he travels, causing Clay to throw his head back with a laugh. That's when George's heart and mind finally connected together.

I'm going to try for him. George didn't want to be scared anymore- he would take that risk again and again because it was Clay. George loved Clay.

Chapter End Notes

hold on yall...

Chapter Notes

shoutout to my homie @/arely.aob for helping me with this <3 ily girl

song that George played (if ur curious): New Light by John Mayer

Trying to convince himself that staying friends was better for George ended up being a lot harder than Clay expected it to be. He figured he would gush out all his emotions on the back of his plane ticket, saying good riddance to the love poison burning his heart, and he would simply move on. But no. It was hard to swallow it when George was so close to him in the photo booth. However, Clay refused to falter in any way since he *just* got George to talk to him again and finally seemed to fix some of the damage from before. Clay needed to keep seeing George in a friendly light since it's what his *friend* wanted.

"Why." Clay shakes his head.

"Because."

"Because *why*?"

George shrugs, slowly pulling the knot out from his sneakers. "Because I can, and you're the one who put your disgusting feet on me."

"Okay-" Clay starts and he swings his legs off of George's knees. "I'm the one booking your flight for Dublin, and I need to be comfortable to do it properly, George."

"Doesn't look very comfortable," George said. Clay looks down at his slumped posture; legs stretched out to the middle of the aisle since he had to keep his shoelaces protected now. He had his back leaning against the armrest with an elbow propped up on it and the other awkwardly resting at the top of the chair. He had his hood up to hide his messy hair, and in all honestly, he was pretty comfy right here.

"Hm, well, it is." That makes George scoff and slide down in his seat, leaning his head back against the airport's white wall. Since being the idiot that he is, George's phone died. He used up its battery from accidentally leaving the flashlight on all night. This left him with Clay being the main source of amusement around here, which sucked since he was trying to do something for him.

"Find any flights for New York yet?"

Clay sighs as he fills out the tiny boxes on his phone. "No. The only ones I've seen are booked and the flights that are opening don't leave until the day before the wedding."

"Why not take those?"

"I don't want to risk it. If one gets delayed, it could get pushed back a whole day, and I won't get there until the day of anyways," he explained. George gives him a funny look and shakes his head. "What?"

"You think too much."

"Okay, if it wasn't for my thinking, I wouldn't be generously booking your flight out of here. It was my idea to check the webpage again this morning, just in case. And what did you say?" Clay prompts, raising his eyebrows. George looks away and doesn't answer for a few seconds.

"I said that it was stupid..."

"Yeah, you did. So shut up and let me use you as my footstool."

"No, you're not going to put your dirty ass sneakers-" George starts as he pushes Clay's foot back down to the floor. "Dream! Stop."

Clay groans loudly and sits up correctly in his chair, hunching over his phone, and pretending like he was struggling to see the screen. He could see it perfectly fine- he just wanted to prove a point here. George didn't fall for it though, and he went back to resting his head against the wall with that dead stare up to the ceiling. In other words, George didn't give a fuck.

So, Clay went to plan two. He sighs and shifts in the chair, sitting still for a second or two before making a dramatic wiggle back, and resting his elbow on the armrest. George glanced over at him for a moment, but then closed his eyes. *Alright, he wants to play like that? Fine*, Clay analyzes his unbothered friend for another second, then he throws his back against the chair with a dramatic groan.

George's eyes fly open and he glares at him. "What is your issue?"

"I can't focus! I'm uncomfortable," Clay said. George presses his lips in a tight line and gives him a shrug to say *'I don't know how that's my problem, you weirdo'*. "I guess your ticket will have to wait..."

The two meet eyes. George looked absolutely done with him and Clay had to give an expecting smile to make his friend finally move his hands so Clay could swing his legs back up.

"You're the worst," George mumbles. Clay laughs and assumes his position again, biting the bottom of his hood with a grin. Damn right he was.

A deal was a deal though and Clay went back to filling out the boxes, typing George's information just like it was his own, and he pretended to ignore how George was not-so-subtly pulling out his laces again. As Clay's fingers hovered over the submit button, he looks at his friend. George. His friend. *Friend, friend, friend. Was this too much? He looks like he's thinking again- ugh, I knew offering to pay for his ticket was too much. He hates it when I pay for stuff.*

"What are you looking at?" George asks, making Clay blink slowly at him. George turns his head to look behind him and then back to him.

"What?" Clay says dumbly. His eyes dart down to the submit button again. He...he almost didn't want to click it. He wasn't sure.

"What were you staring at? Are you seeing stuff?" George waves his hand close to his face to snap him out of his daze. Clay scoffs and slaps his friend's hand away.

"I'm thinking about how great it's gonna be when you leave."

"You weren't saying that a few days ago-"

"George!" Clay yells, mouth dropping open. George smirks and pulls out the last knot in his sneakers, the lace unraveling.

"Ooh! Got'ya there, Dreamie."

Clay rolls his eyes, muttering a 'whatever' and he looks back to the online ticket. Then back up to George. Then down to the ticket. He didn't know why it was taking him so long to press the stupid button or why his thumb wasn't listening to his brain, and it was annoying. The longer he sat here and waited, the more seats were filling up and leaving less room for George.

It's for George, Clay. He hasn't been home in a good month and he threw himself under to stay with you while you waited. This is the least you could do, he tried to convince himself. He catches George's eye again and shifts his gaze down to the floor. *As much as it hurts, I have to let him go. This is what makes him happy. Be a big boy, Dreamie.*

George opens his mouth to say something and then there's a crisp sound of a ping through the airport, shutting him up quickly. The two glance at each other. They haven't heard any announcements for the entire time they've been rotting in this corner.

"Attention: With the hurricane's passing, we are happy to announce that we are pulling luggage off of the previously canceled flights. We assure you our team is working hard to get your items back to you and the runway clear for the resumed flights. Please pick up your luggage at the claim. Thank you!" There's a click followed by a stunned silence. It seemed like everyone was shocked to hear them talk.

They didn't move for a minute, still trying to process what the woman said, and Clay was the first to put it together.

"George! Your shit!"

"My shit!" George repeats and he gapes at Clay. The two stare at each other with wide eyes.

"Go! Your luggage!"

"Ah!" George cries and he jumps up, forgetting that half of Clay was resting on him, and Clay slides off of his chair. He hits his tailbone and pain shoots up his spine.

"Fuckin' ow..." He groans. Clay slowly lays on his back, waiting for the pain to dull as George laughs at him from above- doubled over with his hand bracing himself against the chair.

"Are you...okay?" George giggles. Clay opens an eye and sees George leaning over him now, his friend's big head blocking the bright lights in the ceiling. If Clay wasn't trying to be only friends with George, he would say that he looked like an angel.

"No," Clay snaps.

Another laugh. "That's what you get for pushing me yesterday."

"I did not push you. You fell."

"Sure," George said. He holds out a hand to Clay with a smile so bright, it could've been its own light source. "Now, get up idiot. We have to go get my stuff."

Clay sighs and takes George's hand, being pulled up from the floor, and George was already gone before he could get his balance.

"Hey- wait!" Clay calls, desperately grabbing all of their stuff. As he bends down to pick up his phone from the floor, he hears the paper in his pocket crinkle and he dips his hand in to make sure it's still folded up and secure in there.

"Come on!" George urges him. Clay grunts in response and takes the paper out, quickly shoving it into the front pocket of his backpack before throwing it over his shoulders and walking to where George was waiting.

"Here's your bag that you *were going to leave*," Clay said, putting emphasis on the last point.

"What was that?" George asked as Clay walks past him to lead the way to the luggage claim.

"What was what?"

"The thing you shoved in your bag," George says. Clay trips both from shock and his untied shoes. George laughs as they pull over by the palm tree so Clay could get his shit together.

"It was my old ticket. I keep forgetting to throw it out," Clay downplays and he pulls the laces tight. He had to keep reminding himself that things worked out better as friends and having his foot go numb was a good way to keep his mind off of the fact that he just lied to George- *again*. Bad habit.

"There's a bin right there," George gestures. "You want me to throw it out real quick? While you tie your shoes, I mean."

"No! It's fine. It's not taking up a lot of room. And the shoe thing is your fault."

"You sure-"

"Yep!" Clay declares, ignoring the panic sweep through him. He adjusts his bag and nods his head to the sign pointing them down to the claim where a mob of people were headed. "Let's get going."

He starts to walk and he notices George's slight hesitation, but he pushes on. He really, really needed to throw out his emotional vomit soon because the last thing he needed was for George to find it. Clay was so close to being okay with settling for their friendship. Having them that close to ending it was something Clay never wanted to have- he would never take that risk again. Not in a million years. He was beginning to remember why he didn't want to push things with George.

"Holy-" George whispers.

"-Fuck," Clay finished. The area was mobbed with people and all of the luggage carousels were flashing with red lights, spinning colorful bags around and around. He didn't even realize how many people were stuck here with them.

"How am I...Dream, what do I do?" George gapes in awe.

"Um." Clay didn't have an answer. They would have to fight their way to the front and try to find which one carried George's luggage, which would piss off a lot of people, or they could sit and wait for the crowd to die a bit.

"Should we wait?" George said, reading his thoughts. The two glance at the filled benches with angry-looking people and the kids running in circles around the palm tree.

"If you're fine with standing, then yeah-" A person bumps into Clay and he rolls his eyes to George. "-Definitely."

That's exactly what they did. Not like they had a choice since more and more people seemed to show up and pushed George and Clay back to a fake potted plant in the middle of the big room. They couldn't even joke around since there was people everywhere around them and Clay highly doubted they wanted to hear him and George bicker. George was shifting on his feet, looking equally as awkward.

"You wanna listen to music?" Clay offers when he digs for his headphones in his backpack.

"Depends if I can even hear it through the earwax clogging them," George jokes dryly.

Clay laughs and hands him one, after quickly checking to make sure they were good. "It's either this or listening to those kids scream."

"Give me the left one," George says and he quickly snatches it.

The music swells in Clay's ear and he watches people around him. He feels George lean into him, having that bad habit of unknowingly getting into people's personal bubble. Clay didn't say anything despite the urge to step away, but he turned his head away and became interested in the still gray sky outside. Looked like just another rainy day and a hurricane totally didn't tear shit up out there.

"Ugh, change it. The kids screaming are better than this," George said.

"Wh- wow. Okay. First I buy your ticket-"

"How many times are you going to use that against me? I said I would pay for it myself."

Clay ignored him. "-And now you're calling my music trash. I see how it is."

"I didn't call it trash," George protests. "I said that I would rather listen to screaming kids."

"Like your music taste is any better! You listen to ten-hour Lo-fi compilations on Youtube."

"It's relaxing! You're just mad you had to pay for all of your shitty songs."

"You can't even say you have a taste in music-"

"I do too!"

Clay clicks his tongue and shoves his phone into George's hands. "Prove it."

George's eyes widen a bit as he stares down at the power in his hands and Clay immediately regrets it. Knowing George, he was going to play a stupid song like Gangnam Style or something. He pretended not to watch what George was typing into his phone's search bar.

"Here!" George practically yelled, giving Clay's phone back like it was on fire.

"Jesus- alright, relax. What'd you play?"

George shrugs and his lips tug up. "You'll see. Or listen, I guess. Because it's a song."

Clay chuckles and the song plays. He didn't think too much of it at first, blindly tapping his foot with the rhythmic drums and then he actually starts to listen. The lyrics were telling a story that sounded all too familiar.

Clay's heart stutters in his chest as he focuses on what the song spells out, telling a story about

longing and uncertainty. Clay's stomach hurts and he felt like he wanted to be sick, but surely this was just a song George liked?

He sees George's brown eyes flick over to him, a light pink dusting across his cheeks and Clay loses his breath. *Is he mocking me?! What. The. Fuck. Is he playing.*

"Hey! Hang on!" he says, breaking under his nerves. He grabs his phone from his pocket and fumbles for a second, accidentally playing five different songs and making a weird noise mash-up. George cringes from it and takes the headphone out.

"You didn't like it?"

"It was..." *Too close to home! Not doing that.* "...good, I just have a song you might like."

George watches him carefully as Clay finds the song. As it plays, he sees George's face soften a bit and he studies the air around Clay as he listens to it.

"I know it's your favorite song," Clay blurts. George didn't respond as they keep listening to it and Clay takes another subtle step back from him. "Since you listened to my songs, I thought I would play it. You know? We both like it."

George nods and keeps listening, a calm silence between them. Clay lets out the breath he was holding and he tries not to think about the song that was now on loop in his head. He had to keep telling himself that it was nothing and George was just playing what he wanted, so Clay needed to let it go. He was grasping for straws hopelessly when he knew George wanted nothing to do with him like that.

But, *God-* the song was so catchy. No matter how hard Clay tried to focus on the slow strums of the guitar and the soft singing in his ear, all he could hear were those fateful last lyrics of the song that George played. Clay shuddered and closed his eyes, feeling the time scrape by painfully. Though, he didn't even realize George slipped from his side until there was a gentle nudge

"Oh, what?" Clay said. He pulls out his earbud as stares down at George's blue suitcase in his hand. "When did-"

"You had your eyes closed. You fell asleep standing like a horse," George says. Clay smiles and George took the other earbud again.

"You say that like you didn't sleep sitting upright the first night here."

George throws his head back and groans. "Not this again- I already said you looked stupid sleeping on the floor."

"Ah-ha! But who joined me not even a day later?" Clay points out and he has to bite his tongue to keep from smiling too big. George laughs and it mixes with the music in Clay's ear.

"Okay, that's different-"

"What?! How is that different?"

"Nono, listen..."

The two didn't go back to their place and they ended up walking in circles in the airport for hours, playing their songs and fighting for control about who gets to change the music. George eventually cracks open his suitcase and slips on his gray hoodie while Clay smiles down at the submit button

still staring back at him. *You know what?* Clay thought to himself and he presses the button. Not even five seconds later George's phone lights up on its charger on the wall with his ticket ready to go. *My friend's going home.*

As George shakes the last of their Goldfish into Clay's palm hours later, he realized that he was fine with what they had. Sitting there in the purple twilight, against the cold window, listening to George mumble something about the coding behind the McDonald's Drive-Thrus, Clay let go. He had a deep respect for George and he still loved him, but it was time for them to move on from what happened and this smelly airport. Clay had exactly a day and a half left with George and he was far from done with him. He still had things to prove to George that he was perfectly okay with staying friends, just like how he wanted.

George ducks his head into Clay's shoulder in a shy laugh, the light casting a sharp shadow on his face, and Clay should've felt his heart race. Instead, he rolled his eyes and gently pushed George up. *It's over, thank god. Almost doesn't feel real.*

George yawns and Clay tugs up his hood. The window wasn't as comfy as the floor, but neither wanted to walk all the way back to their spot. Not like they needed to anyways- George's flight was down in this part of the airport and they had all of their shit.

"The stupid metal thing is giving me a headache," George complains to Clay, trying to put the back of his head comfortably against it.

Clay gives a weak snort. "It's 'cause your heads gigantic."

"Shut up! At least I know I have a brain. Can't say the same for you," George said.

"A person with a brain would know that putting your hood up helps."

George falls quiet and Clay sits up from his position, reaching around George's head and he flips his friend's hood up.

"Try that?" Clay shrugs and leans back again. George was still for a few seconds, staring at him, before he snapped back and mimicked Clay's pose. "Better?"

George nodded numbly, still looking into his eyes. "It'll do."

"You're so annoying, George."

"Hey! Don't even get me started..." He scoffed. Clay doesn't remember how the conversation ended- hell, he doesn't even remember falling asleep. He remembers feeling his mouth move and then George's eyes shutting and that's it. Yet, when he wakes up a few hours later, he finds George's pinky hooked with his. Clay doesn't allow himself to think much about it as he quietly slips his hand away, looking at George one final time before he turns away. *It's what he wants*, he reminds himself. *It's what he wants.*

Chapter Notes

YALL SHOULD FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER BC IM FUNNY AND I LIKE INTERACTING W U GUYS!!

its @ passmethemo11y

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

"George! Wake up, c'mon-"

"Where are we going?"

"You'll see."

George opens his eyes to Clay kneeling in front of him with a wicked grin. A grin that George could not trust one bit. He cocks an eyebrow before taking his time to stand up.

"I don't like how you said that," he said. Clay rolls his eyes, walking down the empty hall, and he motions his head for George to follow.

"It's cool! You'll like it."

"Will I?" George asks, jogging to catch up.

"Yup."

"Like how I enjoyed your fountain stunt? Or like when we took the photos?"

Dream glances down at him, bumping their elbows together. "Photos. Just trust. It'll be a fun last-minute thing before you leave in the afternoon."

George didn't like the parallel of all this though. Call him crazy- but being alone with Clay in the middle of the night gave him some flashbacks that made him close his eyes and sigh deeply. He would do anything not to relive that night. Clay kept his space from George as they blindly stalked the airport one final time, passing by the photobooth and fountain before George finally lifts his eyes from the floor to the sudden light in front of him.

"Whoa," he breathes, "when did you find this?"

"Literally ten minutes ago. I couldn't sleep so I went walking and I saw that they turned the power back on for the food court and yeah. That's it," Clay answers. He opens his arms out to present the heavenly yellow neon glow of the McDonald's sign above him, the area lighting with warmth. George did a slow turn to the other restaurants around them and stared in complete awe at the room drowning in a rainbow of colors. It was beautiful.

George turns back to Clay, who was smiling softly up at the sign, features sharp and eyes reflecting the bright 'M' in them. George feels winded.

He's beautiful.

Clay looks over to him, catching him staring. "What?"

"...nothing. Don't worry about it," George said.

"Come on. I'm not done."

Before George could respond, Clay grabs George's hand and guides him to an empty booth nestled to the side of the McDonald's. George could smell the fries and ketchup as he watches Clay hop up on the table, patting the space next to him for George to sit.

"No way! It's probably all sticky and gross."

"It's not. It's fine."

"Dream, I'm not-"

"Don't have much of a choice, Georgie. C'mere."

"You're sitting on ketchup right now. I swear."

Clay gives him a look and brushes off the table with his sweatshirt sleeve until all the crumbs were flung onto the booth seat next to it. "Good?"

George scoffs. "Fine."

He hops up next to Clay and he takes a second to let himself relax. He didn't think about how warm his side was from where Clay was sitting and he didn't think about the kiss and he did not think about England. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, feeling the cool air conditioning and enjoying the smell of fast food around him. It was fine. *Things were going to be okay.*

"Wait- fuck, I almost forgot," Clay said suddenly, rustling for something in his pocket. "Here."

George felt something drop on his lap, and he opened his eyes, looking down at the bag of chocolate raisins he was too angry to eat before. George snorts, tearing the bag open.

"Ere." George offered the bag to his friend through a mouthful. Clay laughs and takes some, turning his body until he's fully facing George with his legs crisscrossed on the table.

"This has to be illegal," George says, be "you're a bad influence."

"Eh, it's fine. Not like we're eating McDonald's, we are simply...borrowing their table," Clay shrugs. George mimics his pose and turns to him, looking at each other, the bag slouching between them.

George giggles. "What number is this? Number three?"

"Num'er tree wha?" Clay asks, popping raisins in his mouth.

"Illegal activity number three. First, the fountain. Then that unfinished room, and now McDonald's," George lists, counting on his fingers.

"George, those are barely illegal."

"Well...we could get in trouble. Plus, it *feels* illegal."

"It's Florida. No one cares," Clay says. He then pauses before adding: "Unless it's about Disney or they find out if you like the Seminoles. Then people care."

George makes a face. "Seminoles?"

"Football team. They suck," Clay said and George bursts out laughing. He remembered that Clay owned a lot of Gator merch, but he never heard of the other team.

"Thanks for this," George said after his laughter died.

"Yeah, no prob man. Sending you back off to England with grace, you know?"

"Yeah...yeah," George said. He watches as Clay gazes at him, waiting for him to continue. George had a lot he needed to say. "It was fun. Minus the whole...you know-"

"Oh, for sure."

"Yeah. I don't know. I guess I wanted to also...apologize?" George tries, fighting an embarrassed blush from his face.

"Yeah," Clay scoffs, "try again. You have nothing to apologize for."

"I do-"

"George, I was the one who lied to you. I was the one who brought it up to get a rise out of you when we were upset and tired. It's my bad."

"No!" George practically shouts. It hurt to see his friend take full responsibility for something he was doing for their sake. "I should've been more...understanding? I shouldn't have hidden from you or snapped. I should've listened to you and I'm sorry for making it a bigger deal than what it was-"

"George."

"Yeah?"

"It's okay. We're good."

George's shoulders slump over with relief. He raises his gaze to Clay and he studies him- eyes darting around every inch of his face and he counts every gleam of light in his friend's eyes. His heart was racing like he just sprinted a mile, but he didn't want it to stop. Clay's silence was too loud in his ears and he wanted to fill it with so many words- he had to bite his tongue to keep from blurting out more. Clay tilted his head at him and George's stomach goes crazy. Clay smiles at him and George's mind goes white.

"You're studying me again."

"Hm?" George hums, half paying attention.

"You do this thing where your eyes move really fast and you zone out on my face. You do it a lot, dude."

George squeezes his eyes shut for a minute to recollect his scattered thoughts. "Sorry I'm just thinking."

"About?"

George stares at the napkin container and he rolls a raisin in his fingers. "I know I said I was sorry and I know you said it was okay. I know you said sorry, but I don't think I ever told you that I forgave you."

He sees Clay straighten his back a bit. "Yeah?" His friend pushes him. George sighs and takes another minute to think about how he was going to say this.

"I...I don't think I can forget what happened," George starts, "but I can forgive. And I forgive you."

He dares to meet Clay's wide eyes again. George meant it- he would never forget the panic he was put in when Clay finally told him, but he was happy to forgive his friend. He saw that Clay was lying to spare them the drama and pain that came with it and George really respected him. Even if he did fuck it up because he wanted to be petty.

"I mean-" Clay says, shrugging, "-you already said we were good. So I already kinda took that as your apology. I guess."

"Oh. Well, I wanted to make sure I said the words and made it clear," George responded. There was a heavy silence before George added: "I don't want to do that again."

"Thank you for the apology, George. Seriously. I'm glad that we're *officially* good now and that we're on the same page. But-"

"But?" George raises his eyebrows. *What else does Dream have to say? He keeps pulling shit out of his pockets*, George thought and he looks down at the raisins. *Literally and metaphorically.*

"But I'm still confused on why you're apologizing still. I appreciate it but I was the one who fucked up," Clay says and George felt another ping of guilt through his body.

"I...yeah." That's all that he could manage to spit out. His brain couldn't make his tongue say the words yet.

"Yeah," Clay whispers, eyes dragging down George's face before looking off behind him. "I'm sorry, George. I really really really did not want to say it then and in that way. I'm sorry for..."

George tunes him out because, holy fuck, Clay needed to shut up since George didn't mean to accidentally agree with him. It wasn't Clay's fault. It's never been. George's breathing picks up as he thought back to the first time Clay visited him in England, the day they took the photo in front of Big Ben. George remembered that day so clearly because he remembered how he felt when he first saw his friend grin at him through the taxi's window. He remembered the honey feeling spreading through his veins when the picture was taken and he knew that Clay was the one. George's eyes meet Clay's avoiding ones, seeing a color he couldn't even see. All he could see was green. Clay with his green suitcase. Clay laying in the green grass of a park.

That's when George realized something.

It's always been Clay. He's not scared. Not anymore.

With the emerald color swirling around in his vision, George reaches out and pulls Clay's hood up, and yanks him towards him. He didn't kiss him. Not yet. He wanted Clay to shut up and be close to him. Dream cares about me. *He won't hurt me. He never did. I was scared about how he was going to see me...but he cares about me. That's all that matters.*

"George?" Clay said in a low voice that sends jolts down his spine and made his muscles tense. George's heart was so loud but Clay finally stopped blaming himself. Clay's breath was tickling

George's lips as he edges closer, letting himself enjoy his friend's hazy gaze on him. His eyes were so green. George could see the bright yellow 'M' in his pupils and he was glad to have this image burn into his mind.

With shaky breaths, George focuses on Clay's lips. Lips he kissed last year and almost kissed days ago. Why did he back away? *Because I'm an idiot. A lovesick idiot who didn't know what he wanted*, George decided and he feels Clay's hands reach up for his wrists, his friend's fingertips leaving an icy trail on his skin. George's skin pricked as Clay held his wrists. *He's going to pull them away. Don't lose him again. Don't.*

George leaned forward as Clay starts to pry his hands off the hood and their lips press together. George's heart explodes and colors flash behind his eyes as he melts further into Clay, whose hands slid off of his wrists in shock.

I fucked up, he thought when Clay was still for a few seconds. I fucked up- oh my god. I knew I should've just told him to shut up! I don't even know if he still likes me after what happened-

Then he feels hands cup his jaw and lips kiss back, lips locking together like they were a fitting puzzle piece. George's eyes flutter shut and they tilt their heads, falling into a mindless rhythm as they breathe in french fries and rain. Clay tasted like the bitter chocolate from the raisins and George could not get enough as he moved his hands into Clay's hair, grabbing fistfuls to pull him closer.

"Hey...hey, come on now," Clay mutters into George's mouth as they pull away. He was panting slightly as he ran a thumb on George's lips before moving back to give him space.

"What?" George asks, already moving forward to kiss again, but Clay puts a hand on his shoulder and keeps the space.

"What was that? After all that talk about wanting to be friends?"

"Talk later. Come here," George demands and Clay laughs, a bright smile on his face.

George was an idiot. Clay knew this since the first conversation he had with him all those years ago. He never thought he would be this much of an idiot though, his words carving themselves into Clay's brain. That kiss was bad. It was dangerous. Clay wanted to kiss George until he passed out from the lack of air and died on this dirty McDonald's table. He spent too much energy pushing his feelings away to have George come back around and destroy him again.

"C'mon. Let's head back and get some sleep. It's getting late," Clay tries. His fingernails dig into his palm in his hoodie pockets to keep from reaching back out to George.

George presses his lips together. "You said I didn't have a bold bone in my body when we were drunk. Tell me at least I proved you wrong."

"I can't tell you anything."

"Then we aren't leaving until you do," George said, leaning forward. George's expression was just as dangerous as that kiss and Clay felt his blood boil in agony as he kept his composure. All of that. For George to come around and kiss *him* instead. You know what? Clay didn't care. As a wise man once said a year ago: *Fuck It.*

Clay shoots forward and pulls George to him, finding his lips quicker than before, and he loved the burn of George's cold hands on his scorched face. It was delicious and Clay shuddered when George sighed into his mouth. Time fell away as Clay moved from George's lip and to his freckles,

kissing each and every one of them, thinking about how long he's wanted this.

The gates that held back his repressed feelings broke open and Clay felt the love spill into his chest again. George was an idiot. So was Clay. He should stop but he couldn't, his hands itching to touch George's face and look at him in this ugly yellow lighting. He could see the blue from the Baskin Robins behind George, and as he kissed his lips again, blue was all that Clay could see. George in the blue t-shirt he always wore. George standing in the blue waters of Florida.

Clay dissolved on the table. It's always been George.

As George crept closer, hands braced against Clay's chest, he knew the danger of his friend and they still had some things to work out. However, when Clay watched George sit up straighter with a dopey grin, he was a goner. *Maybe this was supposed to happen. Maybe the hurricane was supposed to come and maybe I was supposed to tell George.* Clay's eyes close when he feel George's fingertips trace his jaw. Kissing George was like a breath of fresh air and it felt like the hurricane outside was on his skin. It felt amazing to have George.

George presses his forehead against his as they catch their breaths, hearts pounding together and hands finding each other as they sat there. Clay runs his thumb across George's knuckles as he puts his cold hands into his hoodie pocket to warm them up, but George's hands end up roaming around Clay. Tracing, touching, and drawing out his bones in his arms and chest before settling a palm over Clay's erratic heart.

This was definitely supposed to happen. I'm supposed to be with George, Clay pieced together and he pressed a light kiss on his nose. He would never get tired of that. He would never get tired of George. He would never ever lose him.

Chapter End Notes

oooh took a happier direction! they still got that letter that dream wrote tho...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Oh, how I missed your face!"

George giggled as Clay squished his cheeks together and he rubs their noses. George fit perfectly in his hands and he looked beautiful in the dull morning light, his laughter chiming and echoing in the bare halls of the airport. Clay felt like he ate syrup as he pulled George closer to him.

"You just saw me!" George said, smiling as Clay brings his mouth down to his in a matching grin.

"And I wanna keep seeing you," he responded. George giggled again and pressed a gentle kiss on Clay's soft lips. It sent fire down his throat and it was euphoria. George was euphoria. The living, walking, and breathing definition of the word that made Clay's heartbeat kick up and his mind cloudy like someone kicked up sand in the Florida waters. George was his. Not officially yet, but they were right there. Clay had George melting like candy in his hands and George had his heart molded like putty.

Clay leans down and brushes their lips together to feel the addicting coldness of George's. It's been hours since they left the McDonald's table and Clay thought it would be funny to scare the living shit out of George by creeping up on him, but his friend ended up turning around way before he had the chance to jump him. So he went with plan B.

"Stop," George muttered, a huge smile saying the exact opposite.

"You leave in..." Clay does the math in his head, but he kept getting distracted with George's eyes on him.

"Six hours, Dream."

"Six hours! Yeah, I knew that-"

"No, you didn't. I could see the smoke coming out of your head," George snorted and he flicked Clay's forehead.

"Whatever! You leave in six hours and I plan on spending it kissing you until you get on that stupid plane," Clay said. George's arms wrap around his neck and tugs his head down, so their foreheads press together, brown and green eyes filled with hushed emotions.

"Or how about until I pass out?"

Clay's skin pricks. "Whatever comes first," he whispers.

He hears George swallow and fingers dig into his hair. Clay cups George's chin and tilts it up, pressing a deep kiss into George's mouth. It wasn't hungry and desperate like it was before. It was slower and every move was deliberate, letting the muted sighs do the talking for them as Clay grazed his fingers over George's smooth skin. Clay loved George.

"I'm glad that I'm going to remember this one," George says into Clay's mouth and they pull away for a second.

"And I'm glad that you stayed," Clay responds. George takes his hand from his neck and moves it so Clay had it against his cheek. George leaned into it, rubbing his thumb over Clay's fingers, and his heart popped in his chest. He burned the image of George's face in his brain for a minute before leaning back down and kissing George again. And again. And again.

He loved George.

Then Clay blinks and there was George, staring at him like he was a stranger with watery eyes. George never cried. But his breathing was shuddery and Clay watched in complete horror as George struggled to keep his tears back, a small piece of paper clenched in his hands. He just left for a second to fill up the empty water bottle and he came back to this.

"George?" Clay asks, taking careful steps to him.

"You *used* me! You- you...I-" George struggles to get the words out.

"What are you talking about?"

"This! Your stupid plane ticket!"

Clay had to think for a second before his stomach dropped as he remembered what he wrote that day. He wrote that to convince himself that all his feelings were inside his head and that all he wanted was for George to stop being scared. *Oh, fuck.*

"It's not what you-"

"-Think it is?" George finishes. He scoffs and wipes at a tear sliding down his cheek angrily. "I saw it poking out of your bag and I thought I would throw it away for you. Then I saw the writing."

"You have to listen to me, George. *Please*," Clay begged.

"Clay, it says it all. You have nothing to explain anymore."

"No! No, I do! George, please. Please let me explain."

"Explain what?" George snaps and Clay flinches back. "You already explained how immature and how much of a scaredy-cat I am. What else do you possibly have to say to me?"

"I wrote that days ago-"

"Oh, so you let me make an idiot of myself? For days? You let me kiss you and you let me make these...these moves!"

"No! Shut up and listen for a second!" Clay yells, finally at his breaking point. He takes a step toward George and lowers his eyes to the ground. He didn't mean to yell. He didn't mean for George to see the note.

George didn't seem to care though, and another tear falls, bleeding a darker blue on his sweater. "Why did you say you hated me?" His voice was quiet. Broken.

"I don't. Far from it."

"But-"

"I wrote that days ago. When you said you wanted to stay friends," Clay cuts him off and explains, "I needed a way to get over you. To get over how I felt because I respect your choice. I...I can't say

I didn't mean it when I called you scared, though."

George's jaw clenched. "What?"

"I mean, you freaked out. Shut down on me completely. You were hiding in that terminal and stayed far away from me. You're scared and I didn't want you to be and that's what frustrated me the most because I don't know *why* you got so scared."

"Because I was lied to! By my best friend about something that I was involved in and how could I trust you? How do I know you're not lying about what the notes about right now?" George asks and Clay's brain decides to stop working. He gapes at George because he has him caught in a corner.

"I'm not lying to you, George," Clay finally says.

"You hesitated."

"I-of course I did! Because nothing I say now is going to convince you that I'm not lying. All I can say is that I'm not and I can explain what it is the best I can!"

"Please do, Clay. You want me to listen?" George takes a seat on the metal bench against the wall. He motions Clay to sit. "Then I'll listen. But I want you to be completely honest with me. No bullshit anymore."

Clay takes a slow seat and he holds his hand out for the note. He needed to see exactly what he wrote and how bad it looked in George's eyes. He reads his handwriting and remembers how many emotions he felt when he wrote this- he felt frustrated, sad, embarrassed, guilty, but he also felt like nothing he could write would make his feelings for George disappear. And they didn't. This note didn't do shit.

"Okay. George. When I wrote this, it was after you told me that the kiss didn't matter and it was after you started avoiding me. When I wrote this, I was convinced that it was all in my head and that I was reading you completely wrong."

George points a finger at the last line of the note. *I hate you.*

"That...I shouldn't have written that. I don't mean it. I would never hate you."

"I'm so confused..."

"This note," Clay says and he holds it up in the air, "is bullshit. It means nothing. Every single word on here is a lie because I'm telling you the truth now. I don't hate you, I don't think you're immature, and I don't regret anything that happened tonight or last year."

George then leans forward and buries his face in his hands, and that's when Clay hears a shattered sob rip through George's ribcage. He instinctively reaches for him and pulls him to his side like he does to his sister when she starts crying, wrapping an arm around his shoulders.

"Why do we keep fucking this up?" George mumbles.

"Because we aren't talking. I think...we need to lay everything out right now."

George pulls away from him and wipes his face again. "I dunno."

"George," Clay says softly and he gently turns George's face to him, swiping at the tears still falling. It felt like icy pain to be the reason for these tears, right in his heart. "Talk to me. Please."

"Even if you didn't mean it, why would you write it? I don't like knowing that you were thinking these things about *me*. I don't like knowing that you were lying to me for almost a year and I don't like knowing that you were using me to see if you actually liked me or not. What would've happened if I let you kiss me that night and you didn't-" George takes a deep breath.

"And I'm *sorry* that I did! I wasn't thinking right, and I don't actually think you're immature or anything. I wanted to kiss you that night because I like you, George. Sure, I was trying to figure out some stuff on my own, but it was because of *you*. I wasn't doing it just because you were the only person there," Clay explained and George closed his eyes, squeezing out more tears. Clay couldn't tell if that was the right answer or not. "And I know you have no reason to trust me-"

"I still do."

"Huh?"

"Even after you lied, I was never mad at you. I was mad at myself for making you feel like you had to hide the kiss from me and I was mad that I said I wanted to be friends because I don't. I don't wanna be friends."

Clay's heart stops. "What?"

George opens his bright eyes and looks into Clay's. He finally feels wetness on his own cheeks and the rock in his throat, eyes stinging from the ashamed tears in his eyes. Clay hurt George by being his friend. George didn't need friendship then- he needed love. He needed acceptance. Clay gave him the space he thought George wanted and he gave him a brick wall of friendship to break down- George finally finding his courage hours ago. Clay didn't know George at all.

"I'm mad because I made you lie to yourself too," George says. Clay's breath catches, and he wished he had the right words to make the pain stop.

"I think we both hurt each other," Clay says weakly. George nods and barely whispers out an 'I'm sorry' before leaning forward and burying his face into Clay's chest. He holds George tight like he was the last thing on planet earth.

"I love you," Clay mumbles into George's hair. The confession felt sweet on his tongue and brought a soothing coolness to the burning pain in his heart. "I'm sorry, George."

George doesn't respond, but Clay feels his arms wrap around him tighter. George. Never vocal about his feelings but Clay knew how to read him now, and he knew exactly what he was saying.

"I'm sorry, Dream. I didn't mean-"

"It's okay. We're good." Clay holds out a fist and George laughs in his chest, turning his head to give it a solid bump back.

"We're good," George agrees, "but I need some time though." And Clay knew exactly what he meant.

Neither bothered to move for a few more minutes, watching the orange sunrise up from the horizon, George still being held close to Clay. He didn't want to let his friend go. Even if George didn't say the words back to Clay, he had to carry on, and he would wait for him- he would wait a million years for George until he was ready and healed. Until *both* of them were healed and ready to take the next step forward.

Eventually, they pack up their stuff and start to walk to George's boarding area. George was

already a few feet ahead of him but Clay passes by a trash can and pulls out the note from his hoodie pocket, making eye contact with his friend, before ripping it up and tossing it away.

"You know, I thought it was something you were writing at first," George says as Clay catches up to him.

"What? What do you mean?" Clay chuckles.

"Like...it was a fanfic or something, I don't know."

Clay bursts out laughing as a wheeze tightens his chest, covering his face with his hand. George laughed with him, adding onto the joke about what he would write about.

"Ohohoh- you would write us in a fake relationship..."

"What about a flirting competition?"

"Please, I would win in like two days," George mocks.

"Oh my god, no you wouldn't!"

"Yes, I would! I totally would."

There's a new round of laughter as they take seats at the terminal, squeezing between rows of people. Since flights were opening back up, the airport became swarmed with people trying to continue their travels, making it harder for them to goof off like before. They didn't have enough time to explore the airport anymore or enough room for Clay to stretch out on George. Their adventure was coming to a close. However, that didn't stop George from putting his head on Clay's shoulder and falling asleep against him, and it didn't take much for Clay to nudge his cheek against his friend's head and hold his hand. It was a long, exhausting week and they didn't care anymore. They had each other.

"All passengers boarding Flight 89B, please begin to gather your items and wait for official boarding," a female voice says and Clay stirs awake. God, he didn't remember falling asleep.

"George, hey," Clay croaks and he checks the plane ticket in George's slack hand. Flight 89B. That was his plane for Dublin.

"Hm?"

"Time to go."

George wakes up and Clay tries not to laugh at the red circle on his cheek from his shoulder. George looked awful. His eye bags were deep and his hair matte from just rinsing it out with sink water for the past week, but Clay still looked at him like he was the only person in the room.

"Ugh, this is gonna suck," Clay said. He helps George with his things and walks him over to where a line was forming in front of the door that leads to the plane. The sky was a clear blue outside and it looked like a hurricane never happened. Things were finally, officially okay.

"Yeah, I have a ten-hour plane ride to look forward to."

"I meant saying goodbye was gonna suck," Clay says and George grins at him.

"You'll be fine without me."

"Text when you're in Dublin?" Clay asks.

George elbows him in the ribs. "Maybe."

"Now boarding Flight 89B. Welcome aboard!"

This is it. This is the end; Clay thought as he watched George get in line. His friend gave him a sad wave before turning to the woman and he scans his ticket, Clay watching his ratty backpack with holes disappear into the plane. *It's over.*

Clay wants to walk away. He wants to go sit down and sleep for days on end to make up for the exhaustion he felt, but he couldn't move. His legs and suitcase were stuck into the floor like an obnoxious neon green tree and his hand clenches his bag's strap. *No.*

He pushes through people and runs into the hall that leads outside to the plane's door, ignoring the woman yelling at him to stop. His pace quickens as he sees George's back, and when he reaches him, he pulls him into a final hug. Clay wasn't ready to let him go just yet.

"Dream, what are you-"

"Shh. This is just in case you die in a fiery plane crash."

"Comforting." George's voice is muffled and Clay can hear his stunning smile through the word. *I'm going to miss him...*

George pulls away, brushing Clay's hair back and away from his face before saying:

"Goodbye, Dream. Thanks for everything." And then George leaves him.

...so fucking much.

It was cramped on the plane with every seat filled around George and it didn't settle down until the plane starts to take off, the wet ground racing underneath the plane until it disappears into a city beneath him. He had enough of America to last him a lifetime.

George digs into his backpack pocket and pulls out the photo strips, biting back a grin as he sees the dumb faces they made and his eyes settle on the last photo. The one where George didn't look like himself, with a huge smile from Clay, and the one he wanted to delete. Before, George couldn't put a finger on what made him look so different, but now he could. He was in love.

Clouds pass outside the window as George holds the pictures in his fist, squinting at the sun sitting high in the sky, and he thought about his friend. Clay brought so much energy and light into his life just like the sun did to the earth- Clay was George's sun. George shuts his eyes, pulls Clay's face into his mind, and remembers how his lips fit perfectly against his.

I love you too, George says to Clay in his head. One day, George will say those words to him. George is healing slowly and he hoped Clay would still feel the same way when he saw him in the future. But for now, he had to go home and they had to move on with their lives until they met again. And hey, at the end of it all-

George was glad he stuck with Clay.

that is it! its done. final. knocked out fic number 3!

thank you guys so much for the crazy amount of support on this fic. it was amazing and yall really encouraged me to keep writing even when i felt discouraged and that meant a fuck ton to me guys. a fuck ton. i cried like a baby seeing comments that encouraged me.

i love you all!! keep your eyes peeled too bc i have something special for this and then i plan on writing at least one more work :)

End Notes

imma just post the new fic rn before i can change my mind about literally anything lmfao i also have no idea what the post schedule will be, ill grind on this fic and post new chapters asap <3

ily guys and excuse any mistakes made in the chapter
also shoutout to yall motivating me to keep writing ♥
twitter: @passmethemo11y

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!